Revolution and Restoration

Milton, Dryden, Marvell, Butler

Michael Wilding

SYDNEY STUDIES

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John Milton

John Milton has always been a contentious figure. A high-profile republican, he was lucky not to be executed after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Posters appeared advertising God's vengeance on former revolutionaries, and Milton's blindness was cited as evidence that God had already punished him. His books were publicly burned and he spent time in gaol, but was released on the intervention of Sir William Davenant, the nose-less poet (he had syphilis) who in his cups claimed to be the natural son of Shakespeare.

Milton had been the foremost propagandist for the English revolution. He had begun by writing pamphlets about church government. He moved on to advocating easier divorce (his first wife left him soon after their marriage, though later returned), and the abolition of censorship. After defending the execution of Charles I in 1649 in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, he was appointed Latin Secretary to Oliver Cromwell. It involved writing the great defenses of the revolution in response to European monarchists.

After the Restoration he kept away from political pamphleteering and began *Paradise Lost*. He composed in his head in the early morning, and then 'waited to be milked' as he told his amanuensis who came to write the great poem down. His blindness, he pointedly declared, was not a punishment from God, but a reward. It put him in the great tradition of blind bards from Homer onwards. God had given him an inner light.

Rejecting the authority of church and state, the inner light was what the revolutionaries claimed guided them. Milton's stressing it was a provocative reassertion of his radical ideology and *Paradise Lost* was nearly banned by the censor, who took exception to an early aside about a solar eclipse that 'with fear of change perplexes monarchs.' Anything that might seem to question monarchy and its stability was a matter of worry to officialdom.

The England in which Milton grew up was deeply repressive. There were no newspapers. It was forbidden to publish domestic news. The political was inexpressible. Only through discussions of the *Bible* could social and political theories be expressed. Radical puritans decoded it in revolutionary ways. There was no mention in *Genesis* of man being given dominion over other men, only over animals. So on what authority did the rulers rule? Not God's, clearly. This became a crucial Biblical text for the revolutionary Diggers in the mid-century. Milton perpetuates it in *Paradise Lost*, declaring of God that 'man over men he made not lord – such title to himself reserving, human left from human free.' And not only

does Milton declare God's original creation to be one of 'fair equality,' it was also one of common ownership. There was no private property, earth was 'a common treasury.' Celebrating the institution of marriage, in contrast to the Ranters who had advocated sexual sharing, Milton writes: 'Hail, wedded love, mysterious law, true source of human offspring, sole propriety in Paradise of all things common else.' With the exception of marriage partners, everything in Paradise was held in common.

'His political notions were those of an acrimonious and surly republican' wrote Dr Johnson, who disliked them intensely. 'He hated monarchs in the state and prelates in the church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey.' Of *Paradise Lost* he remarked 'none ever wished it longer than it is.' It was largely Johnson who created the image of Milton as misogynist: 'there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females.' Robert Graves' novel *Wife to Mr Milton* developed the case further. Yet Eve is a much more sympathetic figure than Adam in *Paradise Lost* and the Virgin Mary is a major presence in *Paradise Regained.*

William Blake suggested Milton was 'a true poet, and of the Devil's party without knowing it', because of his powerful portrayal of Satan. For Shelley, Satan was the poem's hero. William Empson took the position to its extreme in *Milton's God*, claiming 'the reason the poem is so good is that it makes God so bad.'

It is not quite as simple as that. Having failed in his rebellion against God, Satan attempts revenge by destroying Adam and Eve. He sets off for Paradise as the archetypal colonial invader. He certainly has all the qualities of the old epic hero, bravery, defiance, pride, military prowess. But Milton presents these qualities for serious questioning. He undercuts the whole militaristic ethos of nationalistic epic. The first – and last – great English epic is an anti-epic. Military solutions are firmly rejected. 'Wars, hitherto the only argument heroic deemed' are replaced by 'the better fortitude of patience and heroic martyrdom' that Christ embodies.

Milton makes a point of presenting Satan as the archetypal monarch. The way Milton sees it, God is the sole monarch, earthly monarchs are therefore rebels against the divine order, and so can quite properly be overthrown. But, as he stresses again in *Paradise Regained*, military solutions are not the way. 'For what can war but endless war still breed.' He had been there, lived through the Civil Wars, seen the Revolution fail.

He had no illusions about parliamentary democracy. The parliament in Hell has a thousand members; only four get to speak; and the decision to go to war has already been taken behind the scenes.

In the early twentieth century, Milton became deeply unfashionable in academic circles. T.S. Eliot wrote an influential essay claiming that Milton's verse was 'like a dead language,' imprecise, vague, bad poetry. 'Milton's celestial and infernal regions are large but insufficiently furnished apartments filled by heavy conversation.' 'Milton's dislodgement,' Dr Leavis announced in 1933 'was effected with remarkably little fuss.' There was none of the apparatus of Shakespearean studies supporting Milton – none of the yearbooks, journals, international conferences. They did not appear until the 1970s.

When I took up a lectureship at Sydney University in 1963, Sam Goldberg, the professor of English, asked me what I would like to lecture on. 'Anything but Milton,' I said, since his work had been a compulsory part of he Oxford degree syllabus. 'Right,' said Goldberg, 'Milton it is. I don't want any of the Miltonists lecturing on him.'

The Miltonists were a mixed lot. C.S. Lewis – he of *Shadowlands* as played by Anthony Hopkins – had written an extraordinarily wrong-headed defense of Milton, arguing he was a poet who loved order, hierarchy and all the other conservative virtues. It was not till Christopher Ricks – known now as Dylanologist – wrote *Milton's Grand Style* (1963) that the Eliot-Leavis case was refuted. Ricks showed conclusively the richness, subtlety, sensitivity, complexity, wit and irony of Milton's language. Like all these critics, he stayed clear of the politics, although politics had always been the sub-text of the arguments. It was left to the Oxford historian Christopher Hill to bring the political Milton back into focus in *Milton and the English Revolution* (1978). Hill massively restored Milton as a revolutionary, associating with other radicals, read and admired by them, and never repudiating the Good Old Cause. Young fogey novelist A.N. Wilson promptly issued a quick brief life, in an attempt to rescue Milton from the radicals.

More recently the battles have become quite esoteric. Texas professor Bill Hunter, an expert on Milton's Latin text on Christian Doctrine told me that he had a dream one night. What if Milton was not the author? The text had been published anonymously. Upon waking, Hunter looked into the evidence for Milton's authorship and found that there wasn't any. Miltonists are currently bitterly divided over the issue.

Handel wrote an exquisite setting of Milton's youthful poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso,* getting the librettist Charles Jennens to write a third part, *Il Moderato* – the sort of

middle way the eighteenth century celebrated, after the revolutionary turmoil of the seventeenth century. Haydn's *The Creation* is drawn from *Paradise Lost* – the text hauntingly mutated since it had been translated into German and back again into English.

Amongst the painters, John Martin was famously inspired by Milton's visions of Satan and Hell. Gustav Doré issued a splendid series of engravings illustrating *Paradise Lost*. And the Soviet film-maker Sergei Eisenstein wrote a scenario based on the poem's opening.

Milton's greatness transcends his particular politics. In his lifetime he was more admired abroad than in Britain, an early biographer records. But contemporaries of all political complexions – Dryden, Davenant, Marvell – all admired his work. John Dryden turned *Paradise Lost* into an opera, *The State of Innocence*. It was written but never performed: the lack of costumes might have been a problem for the theatre in those pre-*Hair* days. But Dryden's detailed knowledge of Milton's text resulted in the complex and witty allusions to *Paradise Lost* throughout *MacFlecknoe.*

'Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour, England hath need of thee,' Wordsworth wrote in 1802, during one of Britain's more reactionary, repressive periods. He had a point. Still does.

John Milton: The Early Works

It would be difficult and indeed absurd to approach Milton's poetry without an awareness of his revolutionary commitment. One of the foremost polemicists against the bishops, the monarchy, and the rest of the baggage of the old order, he became Latin secretary to the republican Council of State and official propagandist of the new regime with his great Defences of the English people. After the Restoration his life was in danger, he was imprisoned and some of the books that he wrote were burned.[1]

Yet when we turn to his first book of *Poems*, the political, the revolutionary are not the immediate impression we receive.[2] Certainly the volume includes early work dating from before the revolutionary years. Yet the collection was published in 1645, after the conclusion of the first phase of the Civil War and at a point when Milton had already published polemical and increasingly radical prose tracts – *Of Reformation in England* (1641), *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* (1641), *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), and *Areopagitica* (1644).[3]

It is possible to extract revolutionary sentiments from the poems. But the dominant concern is poetry itself and the pursuit of the proper subject of poetry. What is poetry about, what are its concerns, what are its themes, what are its possibilities and limitations?

Throughout Milton's early poems the subjects of poetry, music, and song are recurrent. They are there in the topics – 'At a Solemn Music' – in the types of poet – Shakespeare, Lycidas, Orpheus – and in the images of the sirens and the music of the spheres. Arthur Barker remarked of the recurrence of the music of the spheres in Milton's poetry that 'the force with which this idea struck Milton's imagination is indicated by the fact that from the 'Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity' to 'Lycidas' he was almost incapable of writing on a serious subject without introducing the music'.[4] The seven spheres of the creation rotated around each other: mounted on each was a siren who sang and the interwoven notes of the sphere-inhabiting sirens created this ideal music that, since the Fall,

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1 Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1977) is the standard political biography.

2 Louis Martz offers the classic apolitical reading in 'The Rising Poet, 1645', in *The Lyric and Dramatic Milton*, ed. Joseph H. Summers (New York, 1965), 3–33.

3 Political readings include Thomas N. Corns, 'Milton's Quest for Respectability', *Modern Language Review*, 77 (1982), 769–79; David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London, 1984), 235–85; and Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1987), 7–27.

4 Arthur Barker, 'The Pattern of Milton's "Nativity Ode"', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 10 (1940), reprinted in *Milton: Modern Judgements*, ed. Alan Rudrum (London, 1968), 54.

is no longer audible to humanity. Importantly, the music of the spheres is anthropomorphized: for Milton it is not a mechanical music produced by the spheres' rotation. The sirens actively sing it. And their singing it involves words, not only music. The music of the spheres is presented as ideal, transcendent song; but this ideal music has a verbal content. The verbal component is important for Milton as it allows for a parallel with poetry; it is not wordless music. 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity' presents us with the shepherds 'simply chatting in a rustic row.' (87) [5]

> When such music sweet
> Their hearts and ears did greet,
> As never was by mortal finger struck,
> Divinely-warbled voice
> Answering the stringed noise,
> As all their souls in blissful rapture took. (93–8)

The voice answers the strings. There is a duality, which we find again in 'At a Solemn Music':

> Blest pair of sirens, pledges of heaven's joy,
> Sphere-borne harmonious sisters, Voice, and Verse,
> Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ. (1–3)

The two sirens here represent voice and verse: that is, they represent music and words, song and substance. Milton is not celebrating a transcendental condition of musical abstraction, but stressing the duality of music and words, beauty and substance, form and content. The solemn music contains a message:

> the cherubic host in thousand choirs
> Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
> With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,
> Hymns devout and holy psalms
> Singing everlastingly. (12–16)

[5] All quotations from *The Poems of John Milton*, edited by John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London, 1968).

Milton's concept of this perfection is of a musical experience that is also a verbal experience. The beauty of the musical is wed to the meaning of the words.[6] These are hymns, psalms, songs. The collection of these early poems contains translations of two psalms which serve as adducible evidence so there can be no doubt. The psalms are content laden. They are about something.

Not only is this ideal model of earthly poetry content-laden, it is also actively consciousness changing. Divine poetry is a practical poetry, concerned with changing the human condition.

> Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
> Once bless our human ears, (125–6)

the poet implores in 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity':

> For if such holy song
> Enwrap our fancy long,
> Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold.
> And speckled vanity
> Will sicken soon and die,
> And lep'rous sin will melt from earthly mould,
> And hell itself will pass away,
> And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.
>
> Yea Truth, and Justice then
> Will down return to men. (133–42)

Milton's Sirens, it can be seen, are very different from the sirens of Tzvetan Todorov:

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[6] I am dealing here only with the English poems, but this concept is explicit in 'Ad Patrem', lines 50–5: 'And after all, what use is the voice if it merely hums an inane tune, without words, meaning or the rhythm of speech? That kind of song is good enough for the woodland choristers, but not for Orpheus who with his singing, not his lute, held streams spellbound and gave ears to the oak-trees and moved lifeless phantoms to tears. It is to his singing that he owes his reputation.'

> The Sirens have the most beautiful voices in the world, and their song is the most beautiful – without being very different from the bard's … one cannot leave the bard so long as he sings; the Sirens are like a bard who never stops singing. The song of the Sirens, then, is a higher degree of poetry, of the poet's art. Here we must note especially Odysseus' description of it. What is this irresistible song about, which unfailingly makes those who hear it die, so great is its allure? It is a song about itself. The Sirens say only one thing: that they are singing.[7]

This is the anti-type of the Miltonic sirens and Miltonic poetry.

But this is, of course, all highly conceptual. Milton cannot hear the music of the spheres any more than we can; it is inaudible to fallen humanity. He can only describe the idea of it, not even paraphrase it. The existence of the music of the spheres is affirmed in 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity' and is the sustained subject of seven stanzas. But what it is can only be gestured at. It has a message, it alters consciousness, it is not a song about itself. But the problem remains for the poet who wishes to approach it of what the proper message is. The poet experiences the poetic impulse, but to what should it be applied? What is poetry for, what is poetry about, what is the proper subject of poetry? This is the concern that runs through Milton's first volume. There is no doubt that the divine music be wed to words: that is never in dispute. But the recurrent anxiety is the search for the suitable theme.

It is remarkable how many of the poems in this first collection were written for specific occasions, written in response to invitations, commissions, opportunities.[8] Whether Milton was invited to contribute 'On Shakespeare' to the Second Folio of Shakespeare's plays, or saw and seized an opportunity is unknown: but it is certainly a poem that appeared alongside other tributes, as did 'Lycidas'. The epitaphs on the Marchioness of Winchester and on the Cambridge carrier Hobson are likewise occasional pieces. The poems on Christ's nativity, the passion, and the circumcision may not be occasional in the sense of having been commissioned, but they mark occasions in the Christian year. They are self-commissioned by a poet who saw his art as something to be applied to a fit subject.

Not everything in the collection is occasional, of course; but this occasional note is dominant. This is clear if we contrast it with the alternative model of 'sweetest Shakespeare

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7 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose* (Ithac, 1977), 58.

8 The occasional nature of these poems has been remarked by, amongst others, Mary Ann Radzinowicz, *Toward Samson Agonistes: The Growth of Milton's Mind* (Princeton, 1978), 119; Edward W. Tayler, *Milton's Poetry: Its Development in Time* (Pittsburgh, 1979), 18; E. A. J. Honigman, *Milton's Sonnets* (London, 1966), 31.

fancy's child', whom we see in 'L'Allegro' 'warble his native wood-notes wild' (133–4). This may not be a wholly accurate characterization of Shakespeare's procedure, but it certainly presents an anti-type to Milton's own practice. His 1645 volume is not one that offers a spontaneous expression of powerful emotion. These are not lyric outpourings. Even the sonnets are frequently responses to events and occasions – the approaching army, a birthday. The poems arise when an occasion or opportunity presents itself, when there is a function for the poet. It is necessary to stress this concern with the proper subject and occasion of poetry that Milton shows before discussing that recurrent concern of his poetry: the concern with poetry itself. These are consistently poems about poetry. Poetry and the figure of the poet recur time and time again. But this is not that simple preoccupation beloved of theorists of postmodernism, poetic self-referentialism. There is a strong self-referentialism, but this is only one of the dialectical poles of Milton's art: against it stands the search for the proper subject. Poetry's concern with itself is an endemic feature of poetry, and something that the poet has to keep in place: this self-concern with the art has to be wed to a concern with content – with the world and the divine. The opening poem of the collection, 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity', opens with the poet's concern with his poetic art:

> Say heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
> Afford a present to the infant God?
> Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,
> To welcome him to this his new abode … (15–18)

These are not the very first lines. The poet is not that narcissistically self-preoccupied. The first lines establish the time in the Christian year:

> This is the month, and this the happy morn
> Wherein the Son of heaven's eternal King,
> Of wedded maid, and virgin mother born … (1–3)

Nonetheless, the poet's concern with poetry is rapidly introduced. The poet questions the muse, discussing the possibility of writing an appropriate poem for the occasion. The setting is of the poet meditating on his art. He sees

The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet,
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first, thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel choir. (23–7)

And then we are offered ‘The Hymn’.

‘On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity’ is not properly characterized by its usual short title, ‘The Nativity Ode’. The poem is twofold: the four stanzas of invocation and poetic self-consciousness, followed by the twenty-seven stanzas of ‘the hymn’, the ‘humble ode’ (24). The ‘ode’ is prefaced by the poet’s concern with his poetic art, which is also a part of the poem. The ‘humble ode’ is offered as an example of the poetic concern, a tentative, ‘humble’ possibility. There is a similar twofold structure in ‘Lycidas’, the poem which closes the English, non-dramatic section of the collection, where a concluding octave places the ‘monody’:

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals grey,
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay. (186–9)

The ‘Doric lay’ of lament is followed by the placing, self-referential lines of the full poem in which the nature of the lay is announced and distanced. We are offered in these opening and closing items not innocent poems, self-contained, unselfconscious effusions, but two works concerned to indicate and place their own nature and strategies. The ‘humble ode’ and ‘Doric lay’ are framed by the poet’s highly self-conscious dramatization of their situation. These are poems within poems. But they are not self-referential poems concerned only with themselves and their art. That self-concern is there; but the ode and lay have their own subjects – Christ’s nativity, Lycidas’ death.

With ‘The Passion’ we have a variant on this procedure. Here there is no framed ode or lay. All we have is the statement of intention:

For now to sorrow must I tune my song,

And set my harp to notes of saddest woe. (8–9)

But the announced song is never delivered. A concluding note tells us '*This subject the author finding to be above the years he had when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied with what was begun, left it unfinished.*'

It may well be that at some level the author was 'nothing satisfied with what was begun,' but at another level the failure is a mark of the poem's success. How could a mortal poet ever replicate Christ's passion? The enormity of the theme is such that it transcends human poetic ability, however many years the poet might have. There is an appropriate inevitability about the way the poet breaks off. It is a large-scale version of that device of classical rhetoric, *anacolouthon*, that Milton exploits in the first speech in *Paradise Lost* when Beelzebub first addresses Satan: 'If thou beest he; but O how fallen!' (I. 84) Beelzebub breaks off, the opening sentence uncompleted; it is a traditional device for expressing passion.

Is 'The Passion' incomplete? Or was it conceived as a broken fragment? The poem is even more than 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity' and 'Lycidas' preoccupied with the problem of writing a poem. Its theme is the difficulty of poetically comprehending the passion rather than the passion itself. It opens with a remembrance of the earlier poem on the nativity:

Erewhile of music, and ethereal mirth,
Wherewith the stage of air and earth did ring,
And joyous news of heavenly infant's birth,
My muse with angels did divide to sing;
But headlong joy is ever on the wing,
In wintry solstice like the shortened light
Soon swallowed up in dark and long out-living night. (1–7)

This first stanza sums up the poem's procedure: a reference to previous achievement, and then joy 'swallowed up in dark and long out-living night', the darkness that takes over from the poetic impulse and engulfs the attempt. This is the poem in miniature.

The second stanza announces intention – 'For now to sorrow must I tune my song' (8) – and again concludes in incompletion, failure: 'labours huge and hard, too hard for human

wight' (14). Christ's labours are implicitly paralleled with the poetic labour on the theme of Christ's labours – 'too hard for human wight'. There is an appropriate poetic self-reference, a symmetry of proclaimed theme and poetic methodology. The inadequacy of poet and poetry is the foregrounded theme:

> These latest scenes confine my roving verse,
> To this horizon is my Phoebus bound. (22–3)

> My sorrows are too dark for day to know:
> The leaves should all be black whereon I write,
> And letters where my tears have washed a wannish white. (33–5)

The verbal tenses become conditional, hypothetical:

> Yet on the softened quarry would I score
> My plaining verse as lively as before;
> For sure so well instructed are my tears,
> That they would fitly fall in ordered characters.
>
> Or should I thence hurried on viewless wing,
> Take up a weeping on the mountains wild. (46–51)

This is not like the achieved poem on the nativity that he can confidently look back to. Nor is it the stumbling approach to the passion with which he began. Now the concern is what I *would* write (if I could), what I *should* do to write (if it were possible).

Significantly, whereas in 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity' and 'Lycidas' Milton invoked the muse for help, he does not do so here. He writes of having had the assistance of the muses in stanza 1, but makes no attempt to invoke them here. It is as if from the beginning he is committed to failure; or committed to demonstrating that the merely mortal poetic skills must fail on such a theme, just as mere mankind would fail in such a situation as the passion. So we have the mortal song, like the prefatory stanzas to the 'humble ode' on Christ's nativity, or the concluding octave to 'Lycidas'. But the divine song remains an absence, the inexpressible. It is a theme 'too hard for human wight'.

This thematic absence is given confirmation by the poem that follows in the 1645 edition, 'On Time'. The subject again is absence, what is lost and erased by time: 'glut thyself with what thy womb devours' (4). But here absence is turned back on itself. Time's capacity for destruction provides the triumphant conclusion in which time will destroy itself and erase its own destructive powers:

> When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb,
> Then all this earthy grossness quit,
> Attired with stars, we shall for ever sit,
> Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee
> O Time. (19–23)

The poem concludes with that affirmation of resurrection and eternal life that 'The Passion' 'should have' reached, that is the ultimate purpose and meaning of Christ's passion.

The music of the spheres is a recurrent image in Milton's early poems. But it is not an accessible model for the mortal poet. As a touchstone of an ideal, or as a model of what might apocalyptically be regained, it has its practical function. But for an immediate model of poetic practice. Milton had to turn to other concepts. The poet–prophet is one that particularly appealed.[9] The seven stanzas dealing with the music of the spheres and the divine song of the heavenly choir in 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity' are succeeded by seven stanzas (19–25) on the prophetic mode.[10] Again they are in the context of negation. Just as 'wisest fate says no, / This must not yet be so' (149–50) to the restorative effect of the music of the spheres, so the oracles are denied their oracular powers: 'The oracles are dumb' (173). These are the classical oracles, superseded by the new testament of Christ. To devote seven stanzas to the silencing of the oracles, to the failure of oracular power, is consciously paradoxical. But this emphasis on loss, this powerful negation, nonetheless firmly establishes the idea of the prophetic as a one-time human possibility. The new prophets, the new prophet-poets, will draw their inspiration from Christian divinity, not from Apollo at Delphos:

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9 See William Kerrigan, *The Prophetic Milton* (Charlottesville, 1974); M. V. Rama Sarma, *Milton and the Prophetic Strain* (New Delhi, 1991).

10 It might arguably be claimed that both sections are of eight stanzas each. For numerological readings of the poems, see Maren-Sofie Rostvig, 'Elaborate Song: Conceptual Structure in Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity"' and H. Neville Davies, 'Laid Artfully Together: Stanzaic Design in Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity"' in Maren-Sofie Rostvig, ed., *Fair Forms* (Cambridge, 1975), 54–84, 85–118.

Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell. (176–80)

It is a beautiful, haunting picture of loss. The failure of inspiration, the loss of poetic powers through death, the failure of achievement in the passing of time, were themes that powerfully engaged Milton. The anxiety of nonperformance inspired his most memorable early performances – here, in 'Lycidas', in 'On Time', and in Sonnet 7, 'How soon hath time the subtle thief of youth'. There is a paradox here, a paradox that in the Christian context is, of course, no paradox. Classical inspiration may now be lost forever: but the death of the classical gods, or at least their defeat, is at the same time the moment of the triumph of the Christian. It is a type of the central Christian mystery, the resurrection. The Christian poet will be a better prophet than any of those who went before.

And so, with a more than witty self-referentialism, at the moment of writing about prophetic powers, Milton achieves prophecy. The parade of the defeated, superseded gods and priests is the parade of the defeated Catholics, extirpated by the Reformation, and of the Anglican bishops, disestablished by the English Revolution, and the ejected corrupted clergy:

In vain with timbrelled anthems dark
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipped ark. (219–20)

Priests, anthems, sable stoles: these apply not only to the classical world but to the immediate context. But the Anglican bishops were not removed until 1642, and Milton wrote these lines – as is pointedly noted after the title of the poem, in 1629. The inclusion of the date of composition in the title is important; it demonstrates that he had achieved the power of prophecy. In the act of writing about the superseded classical prophetic oracles, he attained a divine pre-vision of the defeat of the corrupted clergy that was to come. It is a self-referentialism that transcends the limitations of the self-referential and reaches outward to society. In the poem within the poem he writes about types of the poet; and in writing of the prophetic type he attains prophetic powers himself.

These same powers are achieved in 'Lycidas', as he spells out in the head-note to the poem: it 'by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy then in their height'.

> How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
> Enow of such as for their bellies' sake,
> Creep and intrud, and climb into the fold?
> Of other care they little reckoning make,
> Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
> And shove away the worthy bidden guest;
> Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
> A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least
> That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
> What recks it them? What need they? They are sped.'
> (113–22)

It is one of the great impassioned political tirades in English poetry, 'an expression of the same spirit which had been long making itself heard in the Puritan pulpit and which was at the moment clamoring in the reckless pamphlets of Prynne and Lilburne', as William Haller put it.[11] And the prophecy is there in the retribution threatened, that was meted out in the revolution with the abolition of the bishops and the ejection of clergy:

> But that two-handed engine at the door,
> Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more. (130–1)

It is not an isolated digression in its preoccupations. The political note is there from the very beginning of 'Lycidas', the opening phrase 'Yet once more' bringing an apocalyptic threat from the Epistle to the Hebrews 12:25–7:

> now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are

11 William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York, 1972), 288.

shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.'[12]

Imminent social upheaval, the world turned upside down, is proclaimed immediately. The later request 'Look homeward angel now' (163) carries a further radical implication: St Michael is implored to turn away from facing Spain, the traditional Catholic enemy whose armada had been defeated fifty years earlier, and to 'look homeward' at the reactionary enemy within – the Laudian church and the Stuart attempt at absolutist rule.[13] 'Lycidas' ends with an allusion to Revelation 7:17, 'wipe away all tears from their eyes', an implication of apocalyptic change shortly to come in the society at large, an implication reinforced in the poem's final line, 'tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new' (193). It is a vision of social hope, a determinedly positive ending. As well as the 'corrupted clergy', the speech denounces those other figures categorizable as bad shepherds. Bad academics are surely included: academics necessarily took holy orders, and the context of Cambridge with the shared studies of Lycidas and 'the uncouth swain', and Camus's speech, firmly indicate such a context. At the same time, bad poets are indicted.

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw. (123–4)

Although the revolutionary indictment of the 'corrupted clergy' is the foregrounded reading, thanks to Milton's head-note, the political does not exclude the poetic.[14] Indeed, the poetic and political are inseparable. The poets are bad poets for the same reason the clergy are bad clergy and the academics are bad academics – their words lack substance. They deliver not religious or political truths, but empty wind that inflates and sickens their listeners:

The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But, swoll'n with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread … (125–7)

12 David Shelley Berkeley, *Inwrought with Figures Dim: A Reading of Milton's 'Lycidas'* (The Hague, 1984), 33–4.
13 David Daiches, *Milton* (London, 1957).
14 Catherine Belsey, *John Milton: Language, Gender, Power* (Oxford, 1988), 29.

‘L’Allegro’ and ‘II Penseroso’ of all the poems in the 1645 volume are the closest to the lyric expression of mood and emotion. They have always been curiously resistant to interpretation.[15] After we have pointed to their contrasting moods, what else can be said of them? Indeed, even to characterize their ‘moods’ is difficult: what English words translate their titles?

They share with the other poems of the volume, however, the preoccupation with poetry and the subject of poetry. This component gradually reveals itself. Just before the mid-point of ‘L’Allegro’ ‘the milkmaid singeth blithe’ (65)

> And every shepherd tells his tale
> Under the hawthorn in the dale. (67–8)

As evening comes on folk tales are told:

> Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
> With stories told of many a feat,
> How Faery Mab the junkets eat,
> She was pinched, and pulled she said,
> And by the friar’s lantern led
> Tells how the drudging goblin sweat,
> To earn his cream-bowl duly set. (100–6)

When these tales are done, we move to more literary creations:

> Such sights as youthful poets dream
> On summer eves by haunted stream.
> Then to the well-trod stage anon,
> If Jonson’s learned sock be on,
> Or sweetest Shakespeare fancy’s child,
> Warble his native wood-notes wild,
> And ever against eating cares,

[15] Belsey, *John Milton*, 67.

Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse. (129–37)

The poem ends with a figure recurrent in the Miltonic pantheon, that type of the poet, Orpheus:

Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony.
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heapt Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.
These delights, if thou canst give,
Mirth with thee, I mean to live. (143–52)

'These delights' have by the poem's end become quite clearly defined as the delights of poetry itself.

'II Penseroso' likewise reveals a preoccupation with the poetic arts:

And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Ay round about Jove's altar sing. (45–8)

The absent song of the nightingale is invoked, and though it remains absent it is nonetheless evoked into hypothetical being, into literary being. Again it is a play of absence, the bird unheard, the poet unseen:

Sweet bird that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee chauntress oft the woods among,

I woo to hear thy even-song;
And missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green. (61–6)

At the centre of 'II Penseroso' is the poetic tower, site of mystical communion and poetic creation, and a creation linked with mystical divinatory understanding, prophetic powers:

Or let my lamp at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato to unfold
What worlds, or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook. (85–92)

Rapidly we move on to 'gorgeous Tragedy' (97), 'the tale of Troy divine' (100) and, yet once more, Orpheus:

Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made hell grant what love did seek. (105–8)

It is, notice, once again an affective, effective poetry. Orpheus's song achieves something.[16]

The survey of poetic possibility is extensive and comprehensive. There are the 'great bards' (116), 'anthems clear' (163) and finally as the poem's conclusion, the poet-prophet:

Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew;

16 'The singing of Orpheus has both purpose and consequence', as Stanley Fish observes, 'What It's Like to Read *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*', *Milton Studies*, 7 (1975) 93.

Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures Melancholy give,
And I with thee will choose to live. (170–6)

The presence of Hermes and Plato at the centre of 'Il Penseroso' is emphatic and serious. There is no lack of conventionally literary reference in these twin poems. But for Milton the true literary needs more than the literary. The poet must know the literary, and his work is steeped in allusion and reference. The mention of the bards reminds us that the training for the bards was a committal to memory of the entire bardic tradition. But as well as the literary, the poet must also have knowledge, divine knowledge.[17] There is no point in being a poet unless you have something to say, unless the literary skills are married to content. Technique is essential but not an end in itself. Plato might seem an odd inclusion for those whose immediate association is of Plato's excluding poets from the Republic. But the Plato the seventeenth century loved was the Plato of the *Phaedrus*, not the political but the spiritual philosopher. Plato and Hermes Trismegistus are here as sources of spiritual wisdom. More than that: they are guides for access to spiritual insight by meditation and spiritual communion:

And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet, or with element. (93–6)

For all the knowledge of authorities and tradition, finally the poet needs inspiration, the cooperation of the muses. It is a traditional belief, of course. But this commitment to spiritual inspiration is absolutely subversive of traditional authority. To draw inspiration from the muse rather than from the library and the rulebook is to reject authority and the rules. Inspiration became the ideology of the radicals during the revolutionary period. A commitment to being moved by spirit was a mark of the radically subversive. After the Restoration the poets of the new order like John Dryden, William Davenant, and Samuel

17 See Norman B. Council, '*L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and "The Cycle of Universal Knowledge"', *Milton Studies*, 9 (1976) 203–19.

Butler were concerned to mock, discredit, and dismiss the idea of the muses. Milton's commitment to meditative insight here, and to the muses and divine inspiration throughout his poetic production, can too readily be misread as part of the traditional baggage of ancient poetry, unthought, conventional. It is a tradition, certainly, but it is a tradition consciously thought through and chosen, and in firm opposition to official authority and convention.[18]

The recurrence of 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' of the bardic, the dramatic, the epic, the folk tale, the folk song, and high anthem identifies the theme of these twin poems as the poetic itself, the 'poetic' standing as shorthand for the range of oral and literary arts. The contrasting moods are the contrasting moods of inspiration, the sources of creativity – bubbling-over creative joy, simmering, brooding, creative melancholy. What is rehearsed is a list of possible topics for poetic treatment. Milton's manuscript lists of possible subjects for verse have survived. These two poems are no less lists, resumés of potential themes, catalogues of possibility. But characteristically this centralizing of the concern of poetry is outward reaching: the themes of poetry are the themes of life. The catalogue of subjects is in itself an inventory of existence.

The scenes of 'Merry England' – and the poems have become touchstones of the literary treatment of the idyllically English – are scenes for poetry, and, as always with Milton, the poetic leads into the political. The celebration of human activity, honest labour, is as present as the celebration of the possible poetic. This is a portrait of English rural activity that recognizes people at work – shepherd, ploughman, milkmaid, mower.[19] It is the pastoral of productive labour, not of literary evasion. But the absent song of the nightingale should alert us to significant absences. In this catalogue of poetic themes, certain themes are excluded. This rural England contains no maypoles, Morris dancing, church wakes, there is none of the Stuart programme of social control that was enshrined in the *Book of Sports.*[20] There are no feasts, markets, wassails, skimmingtons, bear-baitings, mince pies, or plum porridge. Yet in no way is it bleakly, dourly 'puritan' in that joyless, repressive connotation of the term. There is song, dance, music, theatre, poetry, leisure. 'Lycidas' makes its political statement by the denunciation of the corrupted clergy. 'L'Allegro' and 'II Penseroso' make their political statements by presenting a beautiful and idyllic rural life in which the Stuart

[18] See Kerrigan, *The Prophetic Milton*, 70–82.

[19] See Wilding, *Dragons Teeth*, 23–7. A contrary view is expressed in Cleanth Brooks and John Edward Hardy, *Poems of Mr John Milton: The 1645 Edition with Essays in Analysis* (New York, 1951), 140.

[20] Milton's opposition to the *Book of Sports* is expressed in his *Of Reformation in England* (1641), in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, vol. 1, ed. Don M. Wolfe (New Haven, 1953), 589.

social controls are splendidly absent. It is a vision of freedom in that regard. ‘Sweet Liberty’ is invoked in ‘L’Allegro’ alongside ‘Mirth’ (35–7). The absent nightingale is similarly significant. We are not offered songs of tragic love, sado-masochistic fables from Marie de France, courtly amours, adventures, adulteries, and retributions. The pastoral presented is not an eroticized pastoral. The milkmaids are not represented in sexual dalliance. The dawn is not an occasion for the aubade of the lovers’ parting. The whole tradition of erotic poetry, so recently reasserted for Milton’s contemporaries by the publication of John Donne’s *Poems* (1633) is absent here. It is a significant absence, and it is reintroduced as an absence again when the poet considers other poetic possibilities in ‘Lycidas’:

> Alas! What boots it with uncessant care
> To tend the homely slighted shepherd’s trade,
> And strictly meditate the thankless muse,
> Were it not better done as others use,
> To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
> Or with the tangles of Neaera’s hair? (64–9)

There is a typical Miltonic ambiguity or duality here. Writing serious poetry is put up as an opposition to engaging in sexual adventures. But there is also another opposition. ‘To sport with Amaryllis in the shade, / Or with the tangles of Neaera’s hair’ suggests, as well as adventures, the practice of the literary erotic. The complexities and subtleties of verse production, the games playing of shaded meaning to be decoded, the ambiguities and innuendoes to be disentangled are all implied here. The temptation is not only the simple temptation of lived sexuality, but the intertwined temptation of writing erotic poetry, in contrast with ‘the homely slighted shepherd’s trade’ which can be read as a metaphor for unpornographic pastoral and religious poetry. The rejection of eroticized pastoral, the rejection of the celebration of sexual adventure in verse is consistent in the practice of this first volume of Milton’s poems; and it is spelled out in the contemptuous dismissal of the ‘serenade, which the starved lover sings / To his proud fair, best quitted with disdain’ in *Paradise Lost* (IV. 769–70).

Rejecting the erotic, Milton moves directly to the traditional motivation for poetry, Fame:

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th'abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. (70–6)

But the fame *topos* is given a striking shift. Instead of the poet conferring fame on the subject – as in Sonnet 7 – here fame becomes the poet's motivation for writing the poem. It is presented as an 'infirmity', the disabling egotistic self-preoccupation of the poet, concerned with the reader's response to the poem and not with the proper subject and motivation. Self-referentialism is applied here in a positive way, as self-inquisition. The poet's concern with writing a poem to secure fame for the poet is sardonically interrogated. Is this the proper motive? Is this a good motive? The fate of the poet Lycidas cut short in youth provokes the poet to question the value of writing for fame: what is the point when you won't be around to revel in it?

The answer is rapidly presented:

Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumor lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed. (78–84)

Poetry is written for divine judgement. The apocalyptic note recurrent throughout 'Lycidas' is here brought into relationship with the recurrent concern with poetry. The final judgement will be applied to everyone. Just as corrupt rulers and corrupt clergy will be on trial when the divine 'pronounces lastly' (83), so will corrupt poets. The proper subject of poetry is a subject that will be acceptable to the divine. That is why the problem of the subject of poetry is so important, why poetry is ceaselessly interrogated in Milton's poetry. It is of a piece with

the concern of Sonnet 7 and of that later great sonnet 'On his Blindness'; correct self-analysis is not the simple egotistical preoccupation with achieving fame, but with interrogating life and poetry in the expectation of judgement in 'my great task-master's eye' (Sonnet 7, line 14).

Poetic possibility is a dominant concern of 'Lycidas', appropriately enough since the subject of the elegy, Edward King, had written poetry:[21]

> Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew
> Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme. (10–11)

The image of Orpheus is appropriately present yet again:

> What could the muse herself that Orpheus bore,
> The muse herself for her enchanting son
> Whom universal nature did lament,
> When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
> His gory visage down the stream was sent,
> Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore. (58–63)

Orpheus is the touchstone reference for the poet, and also of the poet's fate.[22] This is what happens to true poets. True poetry has the power of prophecy, both telling the future and denouncing the corruptions of the present, and it is not welcome. Milton was lucky not to share a comparable fate at the Restoration: probably only his blindness saved him from having his own severed head displayed on a pike.

'Lycidas' is another of the occasional poems. But the poet-prophet properly seizes the occasion to transcend the occasion. The political denunciation delivered has its literary precedents of course – notably Dante in the *Paradiso* (29. 106–7). But how many poets in English had availed themselves of the tradition? To follow this tradition is to be at the same time untraditional. The poem proceeds by a series of tonal contrasts and clashes. 'Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string' (17). With the denunciation Milton reaches out for the

[21] See Daiches, *Milton*, 76–92; Belsey, *John Milton*, 28.

[22] 'The Orpheus myth is a displaced return of the repressed, a repetition of the castration complex that the shepherd himself is subjected to.' 'The poem is, finally, a repetition in toto of the castration complex, what amounts to an obsessive poem.' Herman Rapaport, *Milton and the Postmodern* (Lincoln, 1983), 114, 105.

extreme note, for an excess of force and content that 'shrunk' the streams of Alpheus. In marked contrast to the speech of 'the pilot of the Galilean lake' (109) is the immediately preceding speech of Camus: 'Ah; who hath reft (quoth he) my dearest pledge?' (107). It is a nice dismissal of the useless university, unable to speak out, unable to say anything much at all. The total inadequacy of Camus' response, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually represents its larger inadequacy in the society: its moral, intellectual and political bankruptcy. In this context of the poetic, Cambridge is clearly no model or inspirational source for the literary arts when all it can offer is this.[23]

'Lycidas' is a deeply moving poem, yet not without its sardonic wit. Camus' verbal inadequacy is one example. The catalogue of flowers is another:

> Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
> The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
> The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
> The glowing violet,
> The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
> With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head. (142–7)

It is another commemoration of the English countryside, adapted from the 'Sicilian muse'. But it is there not as an inert repetition of a tradition, but as a tragically ironic paradox. Lycidas's body is lost at sea so there is no 'laureate hearse where Lycid lies' (151) to strew. It is 'false surmise'. Milton has created literary substance from absence.

The catalogue of flowers, the procession of mourners, the complaint about the failure of divine protection ('Where were ye nymphs', line 50), the despair at the futility of the struggles of existence ('Alas! What boots it with uncessant care', line 64) are all part of the pastoral elegy whose tradition Theocritus, Moschus, and Bion had established. Milton knows his authorities.[24] But as with his prose polemics, he cites authority yet sets little store by it.[25] These may be the traditional subjects of poetry as practised by the traditional poetic

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23 However, David Shelley Berkeley presents 'Cambridge University as a Type of the Heavenly Paradise' in chapter 3 of *Inwrought with Figures Dim*, 85–112.

24 See James H. Hanford, 'The Pastoral Elegy and Milton's *Lycidas*,' *PMLA*, 25 (1910), 403–27; reprinted in *Milton's Lycidas: The Tradition and the Poem*, ed. C. A. Patrides (Columbia, 1983), 31–59.

25 See Ernest Sirluck, ed. *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, vol. 2 (New Haven, 1959), 164–5.

authorities, but in the end the authorities are irrelevant, the tradition is unimportant, the old order has been superseded:

> Weep no more, woeful shepherds weep no more,
> For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
> Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor,
> So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
> And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
> And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore,
> Flames in the forehead of themorming sky. (165–71)

Christ's nativity has made the classical tradition obsolete. The promise of resurrection has turned the pastoral elegy into elegant but irrelevant fiction. The proper subject of poetry has changed. The final section of the poem draws on the new imagery and the new authority of Christianity:

> So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high
> Through the dear might of him that walked the waves. (172–3)

Commentators have remarked on the tension of classical and Christian in the poem, yet it is less a tension than a supersession.[26] Just as the opening poem in the first collection has the old classical divinities leaving the scene – movingly, poetically so, but leaving nonetheless – so here the classical tradition is gradually permeated by and replaced by the Christian. The 'fountain Arethuse' (85), inspiration of the classical, is transcended by the mention of 'that strain I heard was of a higher mood' (87). Arethuse goes underground and rises again after 'the pilot of the Galilean lake' speaks: 'Return Alpheus, the dread voice is past / That shrunk thy streams; return Sicilian muse' (132–3). The river Alpheus going underground and arising again as the fountain Arethuse is a prefiguration of the resurrection, however. The classical muses are invoked only to be outclassed by the Christian. The Sicilian muse brings in the beautiful catalogue of flowers but it is a literary token, a fantasy, since there is not a body to strew. That is no problem for the Christian muse. The missing body recalls the empty tomb of

26 See *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton*, vol. 2, *The Minor English Poems*, ed. A. S. Woodhouse and Douglas Bush (New York, 1972) for examples.

Christ's resurrection. 'Weep no more, woeful shepherds' (165). The classical muse remains stuck in despair: the Christian muse continues with triumph. Indeed, we can see this interchange of classical and Christian poetics as a dialogue or debate between the two traditions, in which the Christian inexorably triumphs.

The received image of Milton, and it is not an incorrect one, is of a strong personality. Yet this first volume of poems is strangely impersonal.[27] It is not easy to construct a figure of Milton from it – unlike the figure of Donne or of Herbert that we can construct from their volumes of the 1630s. That idea of Tillyard's that in writing 'Lycidas' Milton was writing about himself is a clever idea but not borne out by a reading of the poem.[28] The title of John Crowe Ransom's essay, 'A Poem Nearly Anonymous', captures the experience more closely.[29] There is a marked absence of the promotion of the personal in these poems. There is a strong concern with poetry, certainly, but not with the individual poet. The poet is the medium transmitting the inspiration of the muses, of the heavenly spirit, not an ego-flaunting author.

But poetry itself is the continual theme. Milton is wrestling with those poetic preoccupations that have been seen as characteristically postmodern, though have surely always been there: there is poetry created from absence, like 'On Time', which laments the lack of achievement, the lack of substance, and thus creates a poetic substance and achievement; there is poetry created from incompletion and failure, like 'The Passion' where the very inability to replicate or paraphrase Christ's passion is the poem's paradoxical achievement (to have produced a 'successful' poem on the passion would surely have been to have failed, to have been entrapped by hubris and delusion and Satanic pride); and there is poetry rehearsing the themes of poetry, poetry about the possibilities of poetry, like 'L'Allegro' and 'II Penseroso', and about the traditions of poetry, like 'Lycidas'. Yet all these preoccupations with the problems and sources and practice of poetry are preoccupations that move outward. Formalist theories are never entertained. The poet has to find the proper subjects and to be open to the inspiration of the heavenly muse to succeed.

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27 Cf. Northrop Frye, 'Literature as Context: Milton's *Lycidas*', *Proceedings of the Second Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, ed. W. Friederich, *University of North Carolina Studies in Comparative Literature*, 23 (1959); reprinted in Patrides, ed., *Milton's Lycidas*, 272.

28 E. M. W. Tillyard, *Milton* (London, 1930), 80.

29 John Crowe Ransom, 'A Poem Nearly Anonymous', *American Review*, 4 (1933), reprinted in Patrides, ed., *Milton's Lycidas*, 69–85. See also Stanley E. Fish, 'Lycidas: A Poem Finally Anonymous,' *Glyph*, 8 (1981) reprinted in Patrides, ed., *Milton's Lycidas*, 319–45.

Milton's *Areopagitica*: Liberty for the Sects

Milton's *Areopagitica*: Liberty for the Sects

The immediate occasion of Milton's *Areopagitica* (November 1644) was *An Order of the Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament* of 14 June 1643. It was an attempt yet again to impose a control over the press that previous parliamentary orders had failed to achieve, since the effective collapse of censorship that ensued upon the abolition of the Court of Star Chamber on 5 July 1641. The controls parliament attempted to impose were far reaching.

> It is therefore Ordered by the Lords and Commons in *Parliament,* That no Order or Declaration of both, or either House of *Parliament* shall be printed by any, but by order of one or both the said Houses: Nor other Book, Pamphlet, paper, nor part of any such Book, Pamphlet, or paper, shall from henceforth be printed, bound, stitched or put to sale by any person or persons whatsoever, unlesse the same be first approved of and licensed under the hands of such person or persons as both, or either of the said Houses shall appoint for the licensing of the same, and entred in the Register Book of the Company of *Stationers,* according to Ancient custom, and the Printer therof to put his name thereto. And that no person or persons shall hereafter print, or cause to be reprinted any Book or Books, or part of Book, or Books heretofore allowed of and granted to the said Company of *Stationers* for their relief and maintenance of their poore, without the licence or consent of the Master, Wardens and Assistants of the said Company; Nor any Book or Books lawfully licensed and entered in the Register of the said Company for any particular member thereof, without the license and consent of the Owner or Owners therof. Nor yet import any such Book or Books, or part of Book or Books formerly Printed here, from beyond the Seas, upon paine of forfeiting the same to the Owner, or Owners of the Copies of the said Books, and such further punishment as shall be thought fit.[30]

Two issues were involved in the order, as Milton makes clear: the preservation of copyright and the control of free expression. This devious political strategy of entangling commercial self-interest with political and religious censorship he confronts early on:

30 *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, vol. 2, ed. Ernest Sirluck (New Haven, 1959) (hereafter *CPW*), 797–8.

> For that part which preserves justly every mans Copy to himselfe, or provides for the poor, I touch not, only wish they be not made pretenses to abuse and persecute honest and painfull Men, who offend not in either of these particulars. But that other clause of Licencing Books, which we thought had dy'd with his brother *quadragesimal* and *matrimonial* when the Prelats expir'd, I shall now attend … [31]

This new order is in effect a reassertion of those earlier Star Chamber decrees that had from 1586 to 1637 attempted a massive repression. The prelates had not in strict truth yet 'expir'd' in 1644: Milton is polemically proleptical here, as if by asserting their expiration it might be hastened. Episcopacy was not formally abolished until 9 October 1646. But they had been excluded from the House of Lords,13 February 1642, and the abolition of Star Chamber had removed their authority for licensing publications. Milton refers to these defunct powers in his reference later to Lambeth House and the West end of Pauls, the residences of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London respectively, who had been appointed licensers of all books by the Star Chamber Decree of 1586,[32] and of 'all other Books, whether of Divinitie, Phisicke, Philosophic Poetry, or whatsoever' that were not specifically the concern of authorities from the law, universities, secretaries of state or the Earl Marshal, by the 1637 *Decree of Starre-Chamber, Concerning Printing*.[33]

> These are the prety responsories, these are the deare Antiphonies that so bewitcht of late our Prelats, and their Chaplaines with the goodly Eccho they made; and besotted us to the gay imitation of a lordly *Imprimatur*, one from Lambeth house, another from the West end of *Pauls*; so apishly Romanizing, that the word of command still was set downe in Latine; as if the learned Grammaticall pen that wrote it, would cast no ink without Latine: or perhaps, as they thought, because no vulgar tongue was worthy to expresse the pure conceit of an *Imprimatur*, but rather, as I hope, for that our English, the language of men ever famous, and formost in the atchievements of liberty, will not easily finde servile letters anow to spell such a dictatorie presumption English. (504–5)

31 *CPW*, 2, 491. All quotations from *Areopagitica* are from this edition.
32 William M. Clyde, *The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press from Caxton to Cromwell* (London, 1934), 20.
33 *CPW*, 2, 794.

The bishops are very much Milton's target. *Areopagitica* in this regard can be seen as continuing that anti-episcopalism that was the subject of his first polemical tracts. But insofar as the bishops were clearly on the way out, if not quite 'expir'd', Milton is now tactically conscripting that substantial body of anti-episcopal feeling in the community into the resistance to licensing. Licensing, his strategy reminds the reader, is to be identified with the Laudian repression of the 1630s. It was one of Archbishop Laud's major weapons in his persecution of Puritanism.

It is part of Milton's strategy to present the licensing and control of printing as an unEnglish activity imported from the Roman church. It is with great delight that he focuses on the imported term *imprimatur*. Insofar as licensing has been enforced in England, this has been done by those quasi-Roman Catholics, the bishops. 'And this was the rare morsell so officiously snatcht up, and so ilfavourdly imitated by our inquisiturient Bishops, and the attendant minorites their Chaplains' (506–7). Thomas Corns cites Milton's 'coining 'inquisiturient'' and 'clever extension of the word 'minorities'' as part of Milton's showing 'how alien the activity of censorial investigation is to the English political tradition'.[34] Drawing on Pietro Sarpi's *Historie of the Councel of Trent* and amplifying it from his own further researches,[35] Milton is able to present a convincing picture of Roman Catholic oppressions of true liberty, at the end of which he addresses parliament:

> That ye like not now these most certain Authors of this licencing order, and that all sinister intention was farre distant from your thoughts, when ye were importun'd the passing it, all men who know the integrity of your actions, and how ye honour Truth, will clear yee readily. (507)

It is unlikely that Milton was under any delusions about how parliament honoured truth; and the introduction of such a concept may have allowed him to feel uninhibited in his own honouring of truth, which is perhaps more political than strictly historical here. For printing had never been without controls in England. 'Printing was introduced into England by Caxton in 1476, and one of the first acts of Henry VII was to take over the control of the Press,' writes William M. Clyde.[36] Fredrick S. Siebert writes 'From Henry VIII's warning against

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34 Thomas N. Corns, *The Development of Milton's Prose Style* (Oxford, 1982), 72.

35 Ernest Sirluck, 'Milton's Critical Use of Historical Sources: An Illustration', *Modern Philology*, 50 (1953), 226–31.

36 Clyde, 1.

'forged tydings and tales' in 1486 to Elizabeth I's announcement of 1601 submitting the question of patents to the common-law courts, the royal proclamation was the chief implement employed in the control of printing.'[37] The first act for the regulation of printing was passed in 1534, the first licensing restrictions came into force in 1549.[38] The charter establishing the Stationers Company in 1557 opened with an explicit concern to restrict the

> several seditious and heretical books, both in verse and prose, [that] are daily published, stamped and printed by divers scandalous, schismatical, and heretical persons, not only exciting our subjects and liegemen to sedition and disobedience against us, our crown and dignity, but also to the renewal and propagating very great and detestable heresies …[39]

Queen Elizabeth I's *Injunctions given by her Majestie* (1559) declared 'that no manner of person shall print any manner of boke or paper, of what sort, nature, or in what language soever it be, excepte the same be first licenced'.[40] In 1556 Elizabeth issued a Star Chamber decree on licensing which empowered searchers to enforce the controls, and twenty years later the Star Chamber decree of 1586 was issued, 'the most important act of its kind till the Star Chamber decree of 1637'.[41] When Milton claims of licensing that 'We have it not, that can be heard of, from any ancient State, or politie, or Church, nor by any Statute left us by our Ancestors elder or later' (505) he is, as Sirluck notes, 'distinguishing between 'statute' and 'decree'' (505n.). And since Star Chamber along with other prerogative courts had been abolished, its decrees were in 1644 irrelevant. But this legalistic quibbling, appropriate enough on a legalistic issue, should not be taken to mean that there had not been an enormous set of precedents for licensing and controlling printing and free expression. After all, it is that very weight of historical precedent that necessitated the writing of *Areopagitica*. We should not let the effortless rhetorical strategies blind us to the all too oppressive historical and contemporary realities.

While eliding the indubitable English tradition of licensing, censorship and repression, Milton nonetheless has the punishments meted out to those who fell foul of that

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37 Fredrick Seaton Siebert, *Freedom of the Press in England 1476–1776* (Urbana, 1952), 30.
38 Clyde, 11.
39 Clyde, 12.
40 Clyde, 13.
41 Clyde, 20.

tradition firmly in mind. Milton at this date clearly prefers to maintain the fiction that evil came from evil counselors rather than the monarch, and he offers no attacks on monarchical preoccupations with licensing and censorship. But the Laudian persecution of the puritans is not something that is allowed to be forgotten. In 1630 Alexander Leighton was arrested for writing an *An Appeal to the Parliament, or Sion's Plea against the Prelacie* which, published in Holland in 1628, had circulated in England. 'He was severely whipt before he was put in the pillory; being set in the pillory, he had one of his ears cut off; then one side of his nose slit; then he was branded on the cheek with a red-hot iron, with the letters S.S., signifying a stirrer up of sedition.'[42] He was also fined £10,000, degraded from holy orders, and imprisoned for life. He was released by order of the Long Parliament in 1640. The persecution of Prynne for writing *Histriomastix* (1632) was another of the great injustices of those prerevolutionary years. Fined £5,000, deprived of his university degrees, condemned to lose his ears in the pillory and gaoled for life, Prynne was another living embodiment of prelatical oppression, something which his second conviction four years later for 'writing and publishing against the hierarchy' only confirmed.[43] One of the prosecutors at this second trial 'complained that Prynne's ears were not as closely cropped as the law had a right to expect'; found guilty, Prynne was 'sentenced to have his ears more closely shaved', fined another five thousand pounds and sentenced to perpetual imprisonment.[44] John Bastwick, prosecuted at the same time for his *Letanie*, and Henry Burton, prosecuted for the publication of his sermons, were similarly fined, condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and had their ears cropped. Burton's ears were pared so close that the temporal artery was cut.[45] When Burton and Prynne were released by order of the Long Parliament in 1640, ten thousand people turned out to escort them from Charing Cross to the city. It was the first of the mass demonstrations marking the early course of the revolution.[46] The mutilation of Leighton, Prynne, Burton and Bastwick provided unforgettable images of political and prelatical oppression. At their every appearance, the image was reinforced. 'It was not in the power of malice to desire, or of ingenuity to suggest, a weekly spectacle so hurtful to the royal cause' as that of Burton preaching without his ears.[47] The horror informs the subtext of one of the

42 David Masson, *The Life of John Milton* (London, revised edition, 1881), vol. 1, 405.
43 Clyde, 39.
44 Clyde, 40.
45 The details are recorded in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 2, 1309–10; 3, 457–9.
46 Brian Manning, *The English People and the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1978), 15.
47 *Dictionary of National Biography*, 3, 459.

best known passages of *Areopagitica*, introduced and precisely evoked in the verbal suggestions of 'cropping' and 'sharpest justice'. Licensing, writes Milton,

> will be primely to the discouragement of all learning, and the stop of Truth, not only by disexercising and blunting our abilities in what we know already, but by hindring and cropping the discovery that might bee yet further made both in religious and civill Wisdome. I deny not, but that it is of greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how Bookes demeane themselves, as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors: For Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet on the other hand unlesse warinesse be us'd, as good almost kill a Man as kill a good Book; who kills a Man kills a reasonable creature, Gods Image; but hee who destroyes a good Booke, kills reason it selfe, kills the Image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the Earth; but a good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life. (491–3)

At one level Milton seems to be idealizing books, privileging them even above human life; but the stress on physicality, on killing, on precious lifeblood refuses any such final conclusion. The dialectical tension between the value of men and books – 'as good almost kill a Man as kill a good Book' – sustains the issue in disturbing suspension with that so simple and so irremovable 'almost'. For the horror evoked at mutilating or murdering books depends on the horror evoked at the murder and mutilation of men. It is the unacceptability of spilling precious life-blood that is the base on which the unacceptability of destroying books is established. We might remember the punishment meted out to John Lilburne in 1638, accused of involvement in the importation of some 10–12,000 seditious books. Refusing to take the oath, he was fined £500 and whipped through the streets of London, some five hundred blows from a three-thonged corded whip, stood in the pillory, and imprisoned till he should conform himself. Continuing to denounce the bishops from the pillory, he 'was

gagged so roughly that the blood spurted from his mouth'. But even gagging failed to subdue him. 'He thrust his hands into his pockets and drew out pamphlets, which he threw among the crowds.'[48] It was a telling contemporary example of Ovid's story of armed men springing up from the teeth of the slaughtered dragon, the books that could not be suppressed for all the spilling of precious life-blood.

Contemporary readers *of Areopagitica* could not but have recalled such mutilations when Milton later introduces the story of Osiris. Ernest Sirluck writes that 'the appropriateness of the Egyptian myth was probably suggested to Milton by Plutarch's 'On Isis and Osiris', which, reporting the narrative legend much as Milton summarizes it, repeatedly insists that it must be understood as an allegory' (549n.). But the prefatory allusion to Christ's ascension, with its consequent inevitable reminder of the all too physical crucifixion and sword in the side, should prevent us from forgetting the quite unallegorical, very literal torn and mangled body and hewn-off members observed and recorded in the punishments meted out to those who paid the penalty for illegal printing, publication and distribution in the decade before the revolution.

> Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his Apostles after him were laid asleep, then strait arose a wicked race of deceivers, who as that story goes of the *AEgyptian Typhon* with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good *Osiris*, took the virgin Truth, hewd her lovely form into a thousand peeces, and scatter'd them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the carefull search that *Isis* made for the mangl'd body of *Osiris*, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lord and Commons, nor ever shall doe, till her Masters second comming; he shall bring together every joynt and member, and shall mould them into an immortall feature of loveliness and perfection. Suffer not these licencing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyr'd Saint. (549–50)

[48] Pauline Gregg, *Free-born John* (London, 1961), p. 66.

It was Lilburne while in the pillory who publicly referred to Bastwick, Burton and Prynne as 'those three renowned living martyrs of the lord'.[49]

The remarkable concreteness and vividness of the passage have been well described by Thomas Corns:

> Note how Milton makes concrete the elements of the story. He emphasizes the physical appearance of Truth-Osiris – the 'lovely form', 'mangl'd body', and 'immortal feature' – and the violence of the assault – the body 'hewd … to a thousand peeces' so that it must be reconstructed 'limb by limb' and 'joynt and member'. 'Truth' is an abstract term for 'truths', things that are in themselves intellectual abstractions. Yet Milton describes its abuse in a savage anecdote of considerable visual vividness.[50]

This powerful specificity establishes the historical particularity of the subtextual reference. But to reinsert the historical horrors is not to deny that the other mythic, mysterious and allegoric meanings are also an important part of Milton's rhetoric. His skill lay in uniting such apparent extremes, in demonstrating an acquaintance with both the most elegant and esoteric literary productions of the past, and the immediate consequences of unacceptable contemporary literary activity. What is remote to us now was all too vivid to Milton's contemporaries. There was no need to cite Leighton, Prynne, Burton, Bastwick or Lilburne by name. Moreover, by 1644 the released martyr Prynne had come forward as one of the leaders of the anti-sectarian reaction. In September 1644 he urged Parliament to suppress such dangerous 'Anabaptisticall, Antinomian, Hereticall, Atheisticall opinions, as of the soules mortality, divorce at pleasure, &c.'[51] To offer specific victims by name would only complicate the general case. The details of punishment are left to the subtext; but along with the recurrent vocabulary and imagery of restraint and jailing[52] – 'enthrall'd' (541), 'fetters' (542) 'shuts us up' (541), 'jayler' (536) – they provide an effective reminder of the tools of repression licensing would be likely to require. To read of the Spanish Inquisition's 'Indexes

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[49] Clyde, 47.

[50] Corns, *Milton's Prose Style*, 91–2.

[51] *CPW*, 2, 142.

[52] Discussed in J.-F. Camé, 'Images in Milton's *Areopagitica*', *Cahiers Elisabethains*, 6 (1974), 30. The literary consequences of the censorship are discussed in Christopher Hill, 'Censorship and English Literature', in *Collected Essays of Christopher Hill: Volume One, Writing and Revolution in Seventeenth Century England* (Brighton, 1985), 32–71, and in David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in The English Renaissance* (London, 1984) 217–21, 227–34, 276–7 and passim.

that rake through the entrails of many an old good Author' (503) is to be reminded of horrors that happened not only to books but also to people. The sardonic wit is only possible because the tortures projected onto books had indeed been applied to humankind.

The immediate controversial context *of Areopagitica*, the 1643 Licensing order, widens out to include the infamous 1637 Star Chamber decree, and beyond that to the preceding decrees of which 1637 was but the culmination. But to *see Areopagitica* only in the context of the arguments of the freedom of the press is to limit it. Simply to situate it amidst Milton's other polemical writings is to see its fuller significance. The issue is not the abstract liberal one of freedom of expression, but the functional one of allowing the expression of what has hitherto been suppressed. Milton is arguing for the freedom to print radical political and spiritual ideas; and the purpose of printing such radical ideas is to effect social change. That early comparison of books to 'Dragons teeth' that 'may chance to spring up armed men' (492) expresses it all. Books are like soldiers. They are part of the battle for change, part of the revolutionary armory. It has been remarked that Milton makes no specific reference to the Army in his pamphlet:[53] but the 'Dragons teeth' image makes it clear that a body of armed men is presupposed. It is there in the 'warfaring' emendation.[54] And the recurrent imagery of battle, siege and other such military reference is unmistakable.[55] Books are part of the revolutionary war, they are the fuel, the armory, the fighters for change. The liberal reputation of *Areopagitica* as 'the first work devoted primarily to freedom of the press'[56] has been at the expense of its historical context. It was a work that appeared in the midst of a revolution. It confronted the attempt to control the press at a time when the press was pouring out increasingly radical materials, when the traditional controls had at last broken down.

Clarendon expresses the conservative horror at the situation that had developed by the mid-1640s.

> THIS temper in the Houses raised another Spirit in the Army; which did neither like the Presbyterian Government that they saw ready to be settled in the Church, nor that the Parliament should so absolutely dispose of them, by whom they had gotten power to do all they had done; and *Cromwell*, who had the sole influence upon the Army,

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53 *CPW*, 2, 175.
54 *CPW*, 2, 515.
55 See Camé, 32–3; Alan F. Price, 'Incidental Imagery in *Areopagitica*', *Modern Philology*, 49 (1952), 218, 221–2; John X. Evans, 'Imagery as Argument in Milton's *Areopagitica*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 8 (1966), 200–2.
56 *CPW*, 2, 163.

> under hand, made them Petition the Houses against any thing that was done contrary to his opinion. He himself, and his Officers, took upon them to Preach and Pray publickly to their Troops; and admitted few or no Chaplains in the Army, but such as bitterly inveighed against the Presbyterian Government, as more Tyrannical than Episcopacy; and the Common Soldiers, as well as the Officers, did not only Pray, and Preach among themselves, but went up into the Pulpits in all Churches, and Preached to the People; who quickly became inspired with the same Spirit; Women as well as Men taking upon them to Pray and Preach; which made as great a noise and confusion in all opinions concerning Religion, as there was in the Civil Government of the State; scarce any Man being suffer'd to be called in question for delivering any opinion in Religion, by speaking or writing, how Prophane, Heretical, or Blasphemous soever it was; 'which,' they said, 'was to restrain the Spirit'. LIBERTY of Conscience was now the Common Argument and Quarrel, whilst the Presbyterian Party proceeded with equal bitterness against the several Sects as Enemies to all Godliness, as they had done, and still continued to do, against the Prelatical Party.[57]

This was the wider situation in which the licensing controversy was situated. Restraint of printing is only part of an ideological battle involving democratization of access to and expression of ideas. The lower orders and women were now giving voice, and more than giving voice, seeking expression in print. As David Petergorsky writes,

> The Printing Ordinance of June 1643 is designed not merely to curb Royalist propaganda, but to suppress the sects through which the discontented are beginning to utter their inchoate but unmistakable protests in an effort to silence the aggressive and irrepressible spokesmen of the poor.[58]

Milton's commitment to this democratization is quite explicit. Of the proposed licensing he writes:

> Nor is it to the common people lesse then a reproach; for if we be so jealous over them, as that we dare not trust them with an English pamphlet, what doe we but

57 Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (Oxford, 1704), vol. 3, 32.
58 David W. Petergorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Revolution* (London, 1940), 55.

> censure them for a giddy, vitious, and ungrounded people; in such a sick and weak estate of faith and discretion, as to be able to take nothing down but through the pipe of a licencer. That this is care or love of them, we cannot pretend, whenas in those Popish places where the Laity are most hated and dispis'd the same strictnes is us'd over them. Wisdom we cannot call it, because it stops but one breach of licence, nor that neither; whenas those corruptions which it seeks to prevent, break in faster at other dores which cannot be shut.
>
> And in conclusion it reflects to the disrepute of our Ministers also, of whose labours we should hope better, and of the proficiencie which thir flock reaps by them, then that after all this light of the Gospel which is, and is to be, and all this continuall preaching, they should be still frequented with such an unprincipl'd, unedify'd, and laick rabble, as that the whiffe of every new pamphlet should stagger them out of thir catechism, and Christian walking. This may have much reason to discourage the Ministers when such a low conceit is had of all their exhortations, and the benefiting of their hearers, as that they are not thought fit to be turn'd loose to three sheets of paper without a licencer, that all the Sermons, all the Lectures preacht, printed, vented in such numbers, and such volumes, as have now wellnigh made all other books unsalable, should not be armor anough against one single *enchiridion*, without the castle St. *Angelo* of an *Imprimatur*. (536–7)

Reading the passage we might remember John Dryden's information to John Aubrey about Milton: 'He pronounced the letter R (littera canina) very hard – a certaine signe of a satyricall witt.'[59] The satirical wit at the dubious labours of the clergy and their overproduction of volumes of sermons should not distract us from the firm populism of Milton's commitment to the 'common people' here. Of course, as Milton well knew, from the standpoint of parliament the common people were a giddy, vicious, and ungrounded people. It was just that giddy, vicious ungroundedness that was the fertile seedbed of revolutionary change. But that commitment to revolutionary change is a subtext not intended to be read by the parliament to whom the pamphlet is addressed. The clergy are brought in as a ready target for the contempt of the political and business classes; their incompetence is introduced as a distraction to be seized upon. If the people are troublesome, then it is the fault of the clergy. Though from the point of view of the law and order authorities, it is immaterial whose fault it is; if the people

59 John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford, 1898), vol. 2, 67.

are giddy, vicious and ungrounded, then to allow the spread of seditious pamphlets would be akin to fuelling the flames of revolution.

Against that frequently alleged élitism of Milton, the evidence of such commitment to the common people needs to be firmly pointed out. And his rhetoric takes on the radical polemics of emergent activism, 'the people's birthright':[60] 'while Bishops were to be baited down, then all Presses might be open; it was the peoples birthright and priviledge in time of Parlament, it was the breaking forth of light' (541). Eleven months later appeared *Englands Birth-right justified*, usually ascribed to Lilburne. 'From such an embryo was to grow the first *Agreement of the People*,' writes Don M. Wolfe.[61] Pauline Gregg writes that it 'covered all that the sects, the small farmers and tradesmen, the artisans, the poor, the imprisoned, and those with any feeling of injustice in city or country could demand'.[62]

It is towards the end of the *Areopagitica* that Milton delivers his unforgettable defence of the sects. Having mounted his various rhetorical and historical arguments against licensing, he has prepared the ground for the argument that he is ultimately making. Earlier he threw in a small, provocative grenade parenthetically: 'The Christian faith, for that was once a schism …' (529). Now he launches the full offensive:

> Behold now this vast City; a City of refuge, the mansion house of liberty, encompast and surrounded with his protection; the shop of warre hath not there more anvils and hammers waking, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed Justice in defence of beleaguer'd Truth, then there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and idea's wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty the approaching Reformation: others as fast reading, trying all things, assenting to the force of reason and convincement. (553–4)

From this image of harmony in variety, of productive, progressive activity from the multiplicity of individual, differentiated concerns, he moves to stress the clashes, the confrontations so inevitable and necessary and no less productive:

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60 On the 'birthright' and enclosures in radical rhetoric, see Jack Lindsay, *John Bunyan* (London, 1937), 253–4.
61 Don M. Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution* (London, 1963), 144.
62 Gregg, 131.

> Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making. Under these fantastic terrors of sect and schism, we wrong the earnest and zealous thirst after knowledge and understanding which God hath stirr'd up in this City. What some lament of, we rather should rejoyce at, should rather praise this pious forwardness among men, to reassume the ill deputed care of their Religion into their own hands again. (554)

And from this stress on the necessities of argument and opinion he moves on to the positive values of separation and division with images of cutting, quarrying, dissection:

> Yet these are the men cry'd out against for schismaticks and sectaries; as if, while the Temple of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there should be a sort of irrationall men who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world; neither can every peece of the building be of one form; nay rather the perfection consists in this, that out of many moderat varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportionall arises the goodly and the gracefull symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure. (555)

What had been harsh and ugly terms of abuse and contempt – schismatics, sectaries – are now resituated in this beautiful account of the building of the Temple of the Lord. The class implications are unmistakable. A clue was given in 'we rather should rejoyce at' men reassuming the 'care of their Religion into their own hands again' (554); it is not aristocrats or bishops or businessmen who take things 'into their own hands': there is a powerful respect here for manual labourers. This is made quite explicit in the unambiguously mechanical trades that are specified in the building of the temple; people are shown cutting, squaring, hewing. These are all manual activities; there is 'spirituall architecture' (555) but no architect, only 'builders' (555). The physical labours of the common people are here properly presented as dignified, noble, beautiful.

The appropriateness of such analogies from physical labour, from working with one's hands, to defend the sects, composed in large part from the working classes, is yet another denial of that asserted Miltonic élitism. That the manual labour of the lower class sects is presented as beautiful makes clear Milton's sympathies. It is not only the radical ideas of the sects that he defends, but the social composition of the sects that he glorifies. His recurrent identification of mental labour with physical labour is one that consistently respects the labour of the manual workers. To write 'when a man hath bin labouring the hardest labour in the deep mines of knowledge' (562) is, as its reiteration of 'labour' underlines, to respect the hard lot of the miners, the workers. Knowledge, mental labour, is ennobled by this analogy from the life of the workers. In pointed contrast is his recurrent portrayal of the laziness and ineffectiveness of the clergy. He offers a fine satirical evocation of the life of intellectual sloth consequent upon a society closed off by licensing:

> there be delights, there be recreations and jolly pastimes that will fetch the day about from sun to sun, and rock the tedious year as in a delightfull dream. What need they torture their heads with that which others have tak'n so strictly, and so unalterably into their own pourveying. These are the fruits which a dull ease and cessation of our knowledge will bring forth among the people. (545)

And he continues with that telling portrait of the cosy, privileged laziness of the clergy:

> Nor much better will be the consequence ev'n among the Clergy themselvs; it is no new thing never heard of before, for a *parochiall* Minister, who has his reward, and is at his *Hercules* pillars in a warm benefice, to be easily inclinable, if he have nothing else that may rouse up his studies, to finish his circuit in an English concordance and a *topic folio*, the gatherings and savings of a sober graduatship, a *Harmony* and a *Catena,* treading the constant round of certain common doctrinall heads, attended with their uses, motives, marks and means, out of which as out of an alphabet or sol fa by forming and transforming, joyning and dis-joyning variously a little bookcraft, and two hours meditation might furnish him unspeakably to the performance of more then a weekly charge of sermoning: not to reck'n up the infinit helps of interlinearies, breviaries, *synopses*, and other loitering gear. (546)

Running throughout the *Areopagitica* is this structural contrast between the dignity of labour, manual and intellectual, and its opposite, the lazy, loitering, easy life readily imaged in the beneficed clergy or Roman church. 'Doe not make us affect the laziness of a licencing Church,' Milton implores God (547). That Puritan commitment to productive labour, allied with a contempt for the clergy, is basic to Milton's thought. He writes of the Laudian clergy in *An Apology Against a Pamphlet*:

> If any Carpenter, Smith, or Weaver, were such a bungler in his trade, as the greater number of them are in their profession, he would starve for any custome. And should he exercise his manifacture as little as they do their talents, he would forget his art: and should he mistake his tools as they do theirs, he would marre all the worke he took in hand.[63]

Milton's hostility to the privileged learned and his support for the unlettered poor expresses itself more generally than in relation to manual labour. Ready to take any opportunity to discredit the clergy he ingeniously suggests,

> It will be hard to instance where any ignorant man hath bin ever seduc't by Papisticall book in English, unlesse it were commended and expounded to him by some of that Clergy: and indeed all such tractats whether false or true are as the Prophesie of *Isaiah* was to the *Eunuch*, not to be *understood without a guide*. But of our Priests and Doctors how many have bin corrupted by studying the comments of Jesuits and *Sorbonists*, and how fast they could transfuse that corruption into the people, our experience is both late and sad. (519)

63 *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, vol. 1, ed. Don M. Wolfe (New Haven, 1953), 934. Thomas Corns cites a number of examples of Milton's contempt for 'serving-men' as evidence of 'Milton's distancing himself from the archetype of the radical enragé and expressing his solidarity with the mainstream of respectable Puritanism' ('Milton's Quest for Respectability', *Modern Language Review*, 77 (1982), 775–6). However, Corns' identification of 'serving-man' with 'working man' is not one that the radical sectaries would necessarily have accepted. The Levellers notoriously proposed to exclude servants from the extended franchise. Serving-men and women were seen as sharing in the middle or ruling-class attitudes of their employers, or at least hopelessly vulnerable to political pressure from them: hence they were unlikely to have solidarity with radical or proletarian aims. For Milton to be contemptuous of a 'serving-man' may at one level have seemed to show how 'he appeals to his educated and propertied readers': but at the same time would not show any rejection of true, radical working-class solidarity.

This contempt for the easily suborned and potentially treacherous clergy is of a piece with the radical sectarians' contempt for the establishment intelligentsia: 'I never found cause to think that the tenth part of learning stood or fell with the Clergy' (531). Against university acquired learning he covertly insinuates the subversive alternative of divine inspiration. Discussing the injustices liable to be perpetrated on the work of an author now dead by posthumous licensing and censorship Milton remarks 'if there be found in his book one sentence of a ventrous edge, utter'd in the height of zeal, and who knows whether it might not be the dictat of a divine Spirit' (534). 'Zeal' and 'the dictat of a divine Spirit' are part of the rhetoric of the radical sects; it is just such things that licensing was concerned to suppress, as Milton well knew. The concepts are introduced again later: 'Under these fantastic terrors of sect and schism, we wrong the earnest and zealous thirst after knowledge which God hath stirr'd up in this City' (554). To write of a 'zealous thirst … God … stirr'd up' is to write from the ideology of the radical sects and schisms. As Petergorsky puts it,

> Puritanism had insisted that knowledge of God could come only through study and understanding of the Bible. By substituting the written word of the scriptures for the hierarchy as the final authority in religious life, it took the effective direction of religious affairs from the hands of the prelates only to make it the monopoly of a literate class. The reply of the poor – and hence, the illiterate and uneducated – was that not formal learning but an inner spiritual experience and inspiration were the true source of religious knowledge, that contact with God was not the exclusive privilege of a superior class, but could be attained by any man however humble his station. On the contrary, that inner spiritual experience by which alone men could be saved was far more likely to occur in those whom suffering had rendered meek and humble than in those whose wealth had made them haughty and proud.[64]

One of the ingenious structural strategies of *Paradise Lost* was to present Satan, the rebel against God, in terms of a tyrannical monarch. The powerful implicit argument is that earthly monarchs are the actual rebels against God, while those concerned to resist tyranny and monarchy, falsely called rebels, are the true godly people concerned with the true restoration

[64] Petergorsky, 65.

('till one greater man / Restore us', I. 4–5)[65], not that false 'restoration' of 1660.[66] That same strategy exists in brief in *Areopagitica*:

> There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. 'Tis their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince, yet all must be suppress which is not found in their *Syntagma*. They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dissever'd peeces which are yet wanting to the body of Truth. (550–1)

As Thomas Kranidas remarks, Milton has 'commandeered the adversaries' image for Puritan controversy and used it against them'.[67]

It is in this context that the strategic employment of patriotic feeling and nationalistic fervour in *Areopagitica* is most profitably understood. The unargued but ever-present case that socialism, communism, radicalism are somehow unEnglish, are somehow against the spirit of the nation, is a powerful instrument of reactionary propaganda. Milton's strategy is simply to assert a huge and resonant patriotism, a powerful emotional nationalism, which he intertwines with his radical polemics. We have already noted the way in which he rejects censorship and licensing as concepts to be identified with the foreign tyranny of Rome and the Spanish Inquisition. He simply appropriates the arguments of patriotism and nationalism and applies them to confront the establishment law-and-order position. It is the reactionaries who are unEnglish. The very spirit of the English language is against licensing, and has no word for '*imprimatur*'. As Corns remarks, 'In the context of linguistic borrowing, Milton, ironically so often regarded as the arch-classicist, is avowedly a populist and nationalist.'[68] The proud identification of a tolerance of conflicting belief, of a commitment to the value of free expression, as something almost uniquely English, produces one of the most memorable passages of *Areopagitica*:

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65 John Carey and Alastair Fowler, ed., *The Poems of John Milton* (London, 1968). All quotations from the poems from this edition.

66 Fredric Jameson, 'Religion and Ideology', in Francis Barker et al., ed., *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century* (Colchester, 1981), 329.

67 Thomas Kranidas, 'Polarity and Structure in Milton's *Areopagitica*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 14 (1984), 188.

68 Corns, *Milton's Prose Style*, 70. Cf. also Elbert N. S. Thompson's remark, 'In his use of homely English expressions and metaphors drawn from common experience Milton showed himself of the new age', 'Milton's Prose Style,' *Philological Quarterly*, 14 (1935), 10.

> And lest som should perswade ye, Lords and Commons, that these arguments of lerned mens discouragement at this your order, are meer flourishes, and not reall, I could recount what I have seen and heard in other Countries, where this kind of inquisition tyrannizes; when I have sat among their lerned men, for that honor I had, and bin counted happy to be born in such a place of *Philosophic* freedom, as they suppos'd England was, while themselvs did nothing but bemoan the servil condition into which lerning amongst them was brought; that this was it which had dampt the glory of Italian wits; that nothing had bin there writt'n now these many years but flattery and fustian. There it was that I found and visited the famous *Galileo* grown old, a prisner to the Inquisition, for thinking in Astronomy otherwise then the Franciscan and Dominican licencers thought. And though I knew that England then was groaning loudest under the Prelaticall yoak, neverthelesse I took it as a pledge of future happines, that other Nations were so perswaded of her liberty. (537–8)

The note of personal experience comes in powerfully here. The visit to Galileo is a moving reminiscence, as well as a telling example. And this assertion of that splendid reputation for philosophic freedom that England had in the eyes of the world, lays the ground for Milton's defence of the sects. A powerful patriotic fervour is expressed in resonant apocalyptic terms – a millenarianism in itself characteristic of and identified with the radical sects. That vision of London as 'the mansion house of liberty' (554) is part of a paragraph that opened:

> Lords and Commons of England, consider what Nation it is wherof ye are, and wherof ye are the governours: a Nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit, acute to invent, suttle and sinewy to discours, not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to. Therefore the studies of learning in her deepest Sciences have bin so ancient, and so eminent among us, that Writers of good antiquity, and ablest judgement have bin perswaded that ev'n the school of *Pythagoras*, and the *Persian* wisdom took beginning from the old Philosophy of this Hand. (551–2)

It is an extraordinary claim that would attribute the classical Greek theories of metempsychosis and the Zoroastrian wisdom of the Persian magi to an English original

source. It is one that would put Britain as the fountainhead of that inspired wisdom that seventeenth-century neo-platonism, hermeticism, and alchemy were concerned to regain, and that gives a nationalistic context to those references to Ovidian metamorphoses and alchemical transmutations with which *Areopagitica* is studded. And Milton moves easily on to England's contemporary spiritual leadership: 'Why else was this Nation chos'n before any other, that out of her as out of *Sion* should be proclam'd and sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of Reformation to all *Europ*' (552). That powerful concept of the English as God's chosen people, the concept that so motivated the parliamentary army and that permeates the revolutionary thought and Cromwellian propaganda of the period, is here proclaimed:

> Now once again by all concurrence of signs, and by the generall instinct of holy and devout men, as they daily and solemnly expresse their thoughts, God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in his Church, ev'n to the reforming of Reformation it self: what does he then but reveal Himself to his servants, and as his manner is, first to his English-men. (553)

That reading the 'concurrence of signs' of the last days, in the flood of learned commentaries on Daniel and Revelation that poured forth at last after the breakdown of press controls, fuelled the activist millenarianism of the radical sects.[69] Millenarianism became the mark of radical activism; nationalism its organizing ideology; the pressing forward of the uncompleted revolution – 'the reforming of Reformation it self' – its inexorable aim.

This concatenation of a proclaimed nationalism, an apocalyptic millenarianism, an assertion of visionary furor and a commitment to the sects is found again in that memorable and justly famous expression of Milton in his prophetic role:

> Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant Nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks: Methinks I see her as an Eagle muing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazl'd eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unsealing her long abused sight at the fountain it self of heav'nly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that

69 Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1971), 11, 68, 111.

> love the twilight, flutter about, amaz'd at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticat a year of sects and schisms. (557–8)

This wider political commitment to a support of the radicalism of the sects makes better sense of explaining Milton's writing *Areopagitica* than that other more reductively personal view often enough expressed. Hilaire Belloc wrote,

> the 'Areopagitica' has no relation to the angry feelings of those days, when men on the rebel side were divided into two hostile forces full of mutual recrimination … It is one of the divorce tracts in that it was an off-shoot from them, provoked by his irritation with the censorship which *might have* interfered with his divorce propaganda.[70]

It is a view repeated by Arthur Barker: 'The *Areopagitica*, though expressing convictions long held, was an answer to the Presbyterian condemnation which, to Milton's evident surprise, greeted the publication of his first pamphlet on divorce.'[71] And Barker went on to assert,

> his defence of the sects arose from common opposition to Presbyterianism, not from an identity of fundamental principles. The first divorce pamphlet was offered to 'the choicest and learnedest'; the *Areopagitica* is less a defence of the sects than of learning and learned men.[72]

The Bellocian case is unpersuasive. As Arnold Williams wrote,

> Belloc has certainly overstated the purely personal motive behind *Areopagitica*. No one who reads it without previous bias can really feel that Milton is concerned principally about the fate of his divorce tracts. A narrowly individual cause simply

[70] Hilaire Belloc, *Milton* (1935) (London, 1970), 167.
[71] Arthur E. Barker, *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma 1641–1660* (Toronto, 1942), 63. The view is reiterated in Keith W. Stavely, *The Politics of Milton's Prose Style* (New Haven, 1975), 66, where *Areopagitica* is described as 'a direct result of Milton's advocacy of reformed divorce laws'.
[72] Barker, 80.

> cannot draw forth such high-principled and universalized treatment as Milton gives us.[73]

The degree of Milton's kinship with the sects, however, perhaps remains a matter for further exploration and argument. Christopher Hill's formulation is one that at least allows the thinking of the sects to have a significant presence along with that of Barker's 'learning and learned men'; with *Areopagitica*, writes Hill, Milton's 'dialogue with the radicals had begun'.[74] And he goes on to note, 'There is much similarity between the arguments of Walwyn's *The Compassionate Samaritane* and *Areopagitica*. In their turn Lilburne and Overton seem to have been influenced by Milton's tract.'[75]

The 1643 Licensing Order confirmed the Stationers Company in its long-established role as the instrument of licensing and the enforcer of the regulations. Prelatical reaction was one component of licensing, monopolistic greed the other. Siebert records:

> The crown had traded valuable monopolistic grants in return for the assistance of the officers of the Company in suppressing obnoxious printing. These grants had been protected by the king through the Star Chamber and the High Commission. With the fall of the king and the abolition of the two judicial agencies, the privileged position of the officers of the Company and of the wealthy printers became exceedingly vulnerable … By 1640 the internal affairs of the Stationers Company had been concentrated in the hands of a group of wealthy stationers. The master and wardens, instead of being elected by the membership at large as provided in the charter, were chosen annually by the Court of Assistants. This court, or 'Table' as it was called, consisted of a self-perpetuating group of monopolists in the printing trade. They controlled the funds of the Company; they participated in the publication of the various stocks to the exclusion of other printers; and by the system of patents and monopolies managed to get control of most of the valuable printing properties. The journeymen and apprentices after securing their freedom found themselves unable to make an honest living. Either they must work for the monopolists at a starving wage or they must engage in surreptitious printing of forbidden or patented works.[76]

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[73] Arnold Williams, '*Areopagitica* Revisited', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 14 (1944), 70.
[74] Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1977), 92.
[75] Hill, *Milton*, 81–2.
[76] Siebert, 167.

Opposition to the monopolists had been expressed in a tract of 1641 ascribed to George Wither, *Scintilla, or A Light broken into darke Warehouses. With Observations upon the Monopolists of Seaven severall Patents, and Two Charters Practised and performed, By a Mistery of some Printers, Sleeping Stationers, and combining Book-sellers. Anatomised and layd open in a Breviat, in which is only a touch of their forestalling and ingrossing of Books in Pattents, and Raysing them to excessive prises*.[77] And the attacks flared up again in 1645 with the result that Parliament's 'Committee on Examinations was forced to call in the master and wardens who were ordered to call a meeting ('common hall') of the entire membership of the Company.'[78]

Areopagitica appeared amidst these disputes, and Milton's opposition to the monopolistic greed of the Stationers Company is clearly expressed:

> Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopoliz'd and traded in by tickets and statutes, and standards. We must not think to make a staple commodity of all the knowledge in the Land, to mark and licence it like our broad cloath, and our wooll packs. (535–6)

To consider this as a species of rhetorical imagery divorced from its immediate historical reality is to miss the urgency and relevance of Milton's polemic.[79] There were indeed strong pressures to monopolize truth. 'The proposal by the committee of the House of Commons to grant to eleven stationers an exclusive right to print Bibles brought the matter to a head. The excluded stationers and printers immediately petitioned the Commons to withdraw the grant and to issue it in favor of the entire Company.'[80] The financial greed of the master printers was a crucial factor in press control. Economic power no less than governmental order was one of the primary factors in effective censorship and repression. By the 1643 Licensing Order the Stationers Company was

> Authorized and required, from time to time, to make diligent search in all places, where they shall think meete, for all unlicensed Printing Presses, and all Presses any

77 Siebert, 167–8.
78 Siebert, 169.
79 Cf. Christopher Kendrick, 'Ethics and the Orator in *Areopagitica*,' *ELH*, 50 (1983), 677–9.
80 Siebert, 169.

> way imployed in the printing of scandalous or unlicensed Papers, Pamphlets, Books, or any Copies of Books belonging to the said Company, or any member thereof, without their approbation and consents, and to seize and carry away such printing Presses Letters, together with the Nut, Spindle, and other materials of every such irregular Printer, which they find so misimployed, unto the Common Hall of the said Company, there to be defaced and made unserviceable according to Ancient Custom; And likewise to make diligent search in all suspected Printing-houses, Ware-houses, Shops and other places for such scandalous and unlicensed Books, papers, Pamphlets and all other Books, not entred, nor signed with the Printers name as aforesaid, being printed, or reprinted by such as have no lawfull interest in them, or any way contrary to this Order, and the same to seize and carry away to the said common hall, there to remain till both or either House of *Parliament* shall dispose thereof, And likewise to apprehend all Authors, Printers, and other persons whatsoever imployed in compiling, printing, stitching, binding, publishing and dispersing of the said scandalous, unlicensed, and unwarrantable papers, books and pamphlets as aforesaid, and all those who shall resist the said Parties in searching after them …[81]

The motivation and incentive for the Stationers Company to undertake these policing activities was the protection of their economic interests. In such a context of the privileging of monopolistic economic power before the free diffusion of truth and knowledge, it should come as no surprise that, in *Areopagitica*, 'images based on money, exchange, commerce, even custom house, constitute the most important group of images'.[82] In that sustained portrait of the 'wealthy man' with his hired divine, it is not illegitimate to suppose that Milton had wealthy printers, amongst other monopolists, in mind. The terms of trade in which the man is portrayed as conceptualizing his religion, that splendid capturing of the way in which the economic mode of thinking Midas-like destroys everything it touches, are terms readily applicable to printing – one of the 'mysteries' with its 'piddling accounts', 'stock', 'trade' and 'ware-house'.

> A wealthy man addicted to his pleasure and to his profits, finds Religion to be a traffick so entangl'd, and of so many piddling accounts, that of all mysteries he cannot

81 *CPW*, 2, 798. A graphic attack on these search parties in *England's Birthright* (1645) is quoted in Clyde, 105–8.
82 Camé, 23.

> skill to keep a stock going upon that trade. What should he doe? fain he would have the name to be religious, fain he would bear up with his neighbours in that. What does he therefore, but resolvs to give over toyling, and to find himself out som factor, to whose care and credit he may commit the whole managing of his religous affairs; som Divine of note and estimation that must be. To him he adheres, resigns the whole warehouse of his religion, with all the locks and keyes into his custody; and indeed makes the very person of that man his religion; esteems his associating with him a sufficient evidence and commendatory of his own piety. So that a man may say his religion is now no more within himself, but is becom a dividuall movable, and goes and comes neer him, according as that good man frequents the house. He entertains him, gives him gifts, feasts him, lodges him; his religion comes home at night, praies, is liberally supt, and sumptuously laid to sleep, rises, is saluted, and after the malmsey, or some well spic't bruage, and better breakfasted then he whose morning appetite would have gladly fed on green figs between *Bethany* and *Jerusalem*, his Religion walks abroad at eight, and leavs his kind entertainer in the shop trading all day without his religion. (544–5)

As a portrayal of that alienation consequent upon capitalism, the passage has not been bettered in over three and a half centuries. The wealthy man is divided within himself, alienated from his own religious impulse which is objectified, reified and becomes this autonomous quality, 'his Religion', 'a dividuall movable' which, revivified by a cash payment, 'walks abroad' in the person of a hireling 'Divine'. Amongst the most enduringly amusing of Milton's satirical passages, it succinctly targets both the wealthy businessman and the hireling clergy. And who were more involved in marketing religion than the printers, booksellers and the clergy?

In admiring the wit, we should not forget the moral indictment of the hypocrisy portrayed. The businessman is left 'in the shop trading all day without his religion' the better to practice fraud or some other unrestrained immoral money-making activity. Fraud was certainly in Milton's mind in the context of the book trade. The final paragraph of *Areopagitica* carries his explicit denunciation of that business:

> Whereby ye may guesse what kinde of State prudence, what love of the people, what care of Religion, or good manners there was at the contriving, although with singular

> hypocrisie it pretended to bind books to their good behaviour. And how it got the upper hand of your precedent Order so well constituted before, if we may believe those men whose profession gives them cause to enquire most, it may be doubted there was in it the fraud of some old *patentees* and *monopolizers* in the trade of book-selling; who under pretence of the poor in their Company not to be defrauded, and the just retaining of each man his severall copy, which God forbid should be gainsaid, brought divers glosing colours to the House, which were indeed but colours, and serving to no end except it be to exercise a superiority over their neighbours, men who doe not therefore labour in an honest profession to which learning is indetted, that they should be made other mens vassalls. Another end is thought was aym'd at by some of them in procuring by petition this Order, that having power in their hands, malignant books might the easier scape abroad, as the event shews. But of these *Sophisms* and *Elenchs* of marchandize I skill not: This I know, that errors in a good government and in a bad are equally almost incident; for what Magistrate may not be mis-inform'd, and much the sooner, if liberty of Printing be reduc't into the power of a few … (570)

The indictment of the Stationers Company could not be more absolute or more specific. Milton alleges a conspiracy by 'some old patentees and monopolizers', beneficiaries from the old court granted restrictive rights, to protect their own financial advantage, and to control the press under the guise of licensing so that Roman Catholic propaganda can be slipped through. That the pamphlet should end on this note demonstrates how seriously Milton took the threat to a free press from the monopolists within the Stationers Company. For all his attacks on prelates and clergy and the relics of the old ecclesiastical repression, the bishops have effectively 'expir'd'. The immediate enemies to a free press are those who have powerful financial interests in the existing system of the press, who have most to lose from the breaking down of their old monopolies.

Milton's attitude to commerce is more complex, perhaps more strategically ambiguous, than those commentators who have noted the recurrent imagery have allowed. Alan Price wrote, 'This satiric juxtaposition of commerce and religion clearly implies a loathing of commercialized religion and a disdain of traders',[83] and J.-F. Camé remarked,

[83] Price, 219n.

> Milton uses his contempt of commerce several times to show what real religion should be. The connection with the main theme is fairly clear. If the two main themes of *Areopagitica* are the freedom of the press and religious liberty, we see that money and commerce restrict both sorts of liberty.[84]

The contempt is certainly there in the portrayal of 'a wealthy man'. But it was the monopolist Milton particularly opposed. He was happy to use the arguments of free trade against monopolists; and that dispute was of course central to the economic issues of the book trade, as indeed of all trades in the course of this bourgeois revolution. The journeyman printers, the small booksellers and importers, wanted a share of the lucrative, protected, closed market. Milton is happy enough to support the small businessman against the monopolist if this will break the stranglehold on truth.

> There is yet behind of what I purpos'd to lay open, the incredible losse and detriment that this plot of licencing puts us to. More then if som enemy at sea should stop up all our hav'ns and ports, and creeks, it hinders and retards the importation of our richest Marchandize, Truth. (548)

It is a metaphor that in its literal sense is intimately related to the issue of a free press. Lilburne had been arrested because of involvement with the illegal importation of banned books from Holland. Truth had been literally imported into 'our hav'ns and ports, and creeks', especially when it could not be published in England.[85] But the prohibitions had been grotesquely not the work of an enemy at sea imposing a blockade, but of the enemy within, the Laudian church and the Stationers Company acting as its policing agent.

Characteristically of the imagery of *Areopagitica*, the metaphor evokes, like the mutilation of Osiris, like the spilling of precious life-blood, the all too literal strategies employed in the immediate past to prevent the free circulation of books: strategies now all too likely to be reimposed. To write of 'the importation of our richest Marchandize, Truth' is not in any way to degrade Truth to merchandise, but to recognize the economic realities, then as now. Books are a money-making business; but to impose controls on the book trade is to keep that potential for wealth generation in the hands of a monopolistic few. The presentation

[84] Camé, 24.
[85] Clyde, 23–4, 42–7.

of truth as 'merchandize' demonstrates clearly that Milton's hostility was not to commerce, but to the monopolistic merchant oligarchies. As Andrew Milner writes,

> This opposition between the policies of the absolutist state and the needs of the developing capitalist mode of production informs the whole of early seventeenth-century English history. Thus, for example, the Crown supported both internal monopolies and monopolistic trading companies, such as the Merchant Adventurers, so much so that in 1621 some 700 of them were in existence. Parliament, on the other hand, generally opposed these restrictions on both internal and external free trade. In 1601 it declared free trade with France, Spain and Portugal; in 1624 its Statute of Monopolies declared all monopolies not granted to corporations illegal; and in the same year it specifically abolished the Merchant Adventurers' monopoly on the cloth trade. Significantly, this monopoly was restored by Charles I during the period of personal government.[86]

It is just that explosive monopoly on the cloth trade that Milton introduces in the passage cited earlier:

> Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopoliz'd and traded in by tickets and statutes, and standards. We must not think to make a staple commodity of all the knowledge in the Land, to mark and licence it like our broad cloath, and our wooll packs. (535–6)

It is not treating Truth as a merchandize that is degrading, for books are products that are, when allowed, bought and sold; the degradation is in treating truth as a monopolizable commodity, whose circulation and exchange is restricted, licensed and limited to the inflated profit of the few and the disadvantage of the many.

Until 1644 none of Milton's prose works was registered or licensed. The first of his works to appear after the June 1643 order, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (August 1643) was neither registered nor licensed, nor did it carry the author's name; the printers were identified only by initials. The second edition, however, carried the initials J.M. on the title page and the name John Milton at the end of the prefatory address 'To the Parliament of

86 Andrew Milner, *John Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1981), 70.

England, with the Assembly'. *Of Education* was the first of his works to be licensed and registered, 4 June 1644, followed by his translation *The Judgment of Martin Bucer Touching Divorce* on 15 July 1644. But conformity with these two titles did not prevent an attempt at harassment.

> On August 24 the Stationers' Company delivered to the House of Commons a petition whose substance is not known but which that House referred, on the 26th, to its Committee for Printing with instructions to prepare an ordinance and 'diligently to inquire out the Authors, Printers, and Publishers of the Pamphlet against the Immortality of the Soul, and concerning Divorce'.[87]

When *Areopagitica* appeared it had been neither registered nor licensed, nor did it carry a printer's name; the printer remains unknown to this day. Its authorship, however, was proclaimed in italic capitals on the title page. *Tetrachordon* and *Colasterion* of the following year, 1645, were similarly neither registered nor licensed, nor were the printers' names given, nor were there any identifying printers' devices. Both displayed the author's initials on the title page, and *Tetrachordon* contained the author's name at the end of 'The Address to the Parliament'. But Humphrey Moseley registered and submitted for licence Milton's *Poems,* 6 October 1645. Plainly, various strategies were being tried by various printers and booksellers, involving speculations about the likelihood or otherwise of a book's being licensed, and the gains and risks involved in flouting the order.

Areopagitica is clearly a deliberate challenge. The refusal to supply a printer's name had the practical advantage of evading detection, but the provision of the information 'LONDON / Printed in the Year, 1644' merely assured the Stationers Company that printing was going on in the capital without their control. The author's name is defiantly provided; though not without ambiguity. For the pamphlet purports to be a 'SPEECH'. If the pamphlet were designed as a provocative test case, Milton could always have claimed that no licence was required to prepare a speech; and what evidence could be adduced that he the author was involved in the printing? The paradox that what might freely be delivered as a speech could not be printed offered a telling point against the restrictions on printing. It is a speech addressed 'To the PARLAMENT OF *ENGLAND*', the place of parley, of speech. There is perhaps a residual sense that parliament is a place of free speech, with the privilege of

[87] *CPW*, 2, 142.

uttering things that outside its assembly would not be allowable. But since someone who is not a member of parliament – 'wanting such accesse in a private condition' (486) – cannot readily deliver a speech to parliament, how else can the speech be delivered except by printing? The address to parliament is very much a strategy, as parliament could not but be aware; a way, as Joseph Wittreich points out, 'of openly addressing Parliament and then marking off a much wider audience', a 'technique, initiated in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*'.[88] The very title *Areopagitica*, from the seventh oration of Isocrates, usually called the *Areopagitic Discourse* or *Areopagiticus*, hints at the ambiguous nature of this speech that is perhaps not a speech at all: as Sirluck notes, 'Isocrates (436–338 B.C.) conducted a famous school of rhetoric at Athens. Physical and nervous weakness prevented him from speaking in public; hence he composed his 'orations' to be read' (486 n.). If a speech is designed to be read, how else in this modern age is it to be circulated except by printing? The absurdity of having to make 'A / SPEECH … For the Liberty of UNLICENC'D / PRINTING' is a purely conceptual absurdity; the speech is not spoken but printed, and printed unlicensed, enacting that very liberty it demands.

The argument that if printing is to be licensed, so should speeches and much else be, is one made at length a third of the way into the tract. The case is that such ultra-repressive logic is absurd; but that since printing is so small a part of our communicative arts, to single it out for licensing while these other communications go free, is in itself illogical and absurd:

> If we think to regulat Printing, thereby *to* rectifie manners, we must regulat all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightfull to man. No musick must be heard, no song be set or sung, but what is grave and *Dorick*. There must be licencing dancers, that no gesture, motion, or deportment be taught our youth but what by their allowance shall be thought honest; for such *Plato* was provided of; It will ask more then the work of twenty licencers to examin all the lutes, the violins, and the ghittarrs in every house; they must not be suffer'd to prattle as they doe, but must be licenc'd what they may say. And who shall silence all the airs and madrigalls, that whisper softnes in chambers? The Windows also, and the *Balcone's* must be thought on, there are shrewd books, with dangerous Frontispices set to sale; who shall prohibit them, shall twenty licencers? The villages also must have their visitors to enquire what

[88] Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., '"The Crown of Eloquence": The Figure of the Orator in Milton's Prose Works', in *Achievements of the Left Hand: Essays on the Prose of John Milton*, ed. Michael Lieb and John T. Shawcross (Amherst, 1974), 18.

> lectures the bagpipe and the rebbeck reads ev'n to the ballatry, and the gammuth of every *municipal* fidler, for these are the Countrymans *Arcadia's* and his *Monte Mayors*. Next, what more Nationall corruption, for which England hears ill abroad, then houshold gluttony; who shall be the rectors of our daily rioting? and what shall be done to inhibit the multitudes that frequent those houses where drunk'nes is sold and harbour'd? Our garments also should be referr'd to the licencing of some more sober work-masters to see them cut into a lesse wanton garb. Who shall regulat all the mixt conversation of our youth, male and female together, as is the fashion of this Country, who shall still appoint what shall be discours'd, what presum'd, and no furder? Lastly, who shall forbid and separat all idle resort, all evil company? (523–6)

It is a powerful, beautiful, amusing and plangent passage. But the extension of logic to absurdity is not its only mode. For much of what Milton raises to mock had been at times seriously proposed, and was to be proposed again. These were absurdities that all too readily could be implemented. The comedy is fragile; our expected freedoms are very vulnerable. Sirluck notes how Plato (*Laws*, VII) discussed the kinds of music to be allowed and prohibited; Wither in 1641 suggested 'Scurrilous and obscaene *Songs*' should be censored; Archbishop Laud required every bishop to send 'visitors' to report on the state of each parish (1634) and the universities (1636) and put restrictions on lecturers (1629, 1633); while between 1363 and 1597 there had been laws regulating dress.[89] This dialectical confrontation of fantasy and history is a characteristic of political polemic. Having thought up an extreme expression of what might be the logical extension of the opponent's position, all too readily it appears that the supposed absurdity has been true all along. The joke returns in full, educative horror.

Of course it is no logic to say, if we suppress this we ought to suppress that, and since we cannot suppress everything we must suppress nothing. Far more socially subversive ideas were emerging from the press than from village dances. And Milton's intention is to allow the emergence of these dangerous ideas, to educate the village dancers away from those village sports and form them into a revolutionary vanguard. The argument, in this context, is mere subterfuge. It is making a case as he had learned to make a case in those academic exercises at Cambridge. The true case – let us open the floodgates to subversion – was not one that could be put; yet that quite clearly is the implication and consequence of the sort of

[89] *CPW*, 2, 486n.

arguments he makes, and to prevent which the repressive licensing was proposed. Looked at in this way, the whole argument is in bad faith. It is strategic, decorative, rhetorical. Obviously the more controls over free expression and the media, the more static and controlled will be, at least in the short view, the society.

But Milton does not depend only on these logical extensions and dialectical surprises for his effects. Simultaneously he offers an insinuating sensuality. There is a sardonic, erotic, suggestive lilt in 'who shall silence all the airs and madrigalls, that whisper softnes in chambers'. A sexual *double entendre* runs through 'who shall regulat all the mixt conversation of our youth, male and female together, as is the fashion of this Country' where the play on conversation / intercourse and the punning associations of country ('country matters') bring in a suggestive subtext. And as so often in these metaphors and resonances, there is an all too literal reminder of repressive realities. The voyeuristic snooping that led to prosecutions for fornication and adultery in the church courts and the Council in the Marches had helped, as much as the search for heresy and subversion, to lead to the discrediting of church and prerogative courts in the years leading up to the revolution.[90]

But more than those academic issues of logicality and illogicality, Milton is concerned to demonstrate the impracticality of the licensing proposals. In suggesting sardonically the extension of licensing to dance, music and conversation, he repeatedly asks whether twenty licensers will be enough.[91] His stress on practicality, that we see in his support for the mechanics and working-men of the sects against the untested, cloistered, inexperienced clergy, appears with the full force of personal experience in his arguments from authorial practice.

> And what if the author shall be one so copious of fancie, as to have many things well worth the adding, coming into his mind after licencing, while the book is yet under the Presse, which not seldom happ'ns to the best and diligentest writers; and that perhaps a dozen times in one book. The Printer dares not go beyond his licenc't copy; so often then must the author trudge to his leav-giver, that those his new insertions may be viewd; and many a jaunt will be made, ere that licencer, for it must be the same man, can either be found, or found at leisure; mean while either the Presse must

[90] See Penry Williams, 'The Activity of the Council in the Marches Under the Early Stuarts', *Welsh Historical Review*, 1 (1961), 143-4.

[91] There were in fact more than twenty appointed by the 1643 order. See Hilary Gatti, 'The "Twenty Ingrossers" of Milton's *Areopagitica*', *Notes and Queries*, NS 29 (1982), 498–9.

> stand still, which is no small damage, or the author loose his accuratest thoughts, & send the book forth wors then he had made it, which to a diligent writer is the greatest melancholy and vexation that can befall. (532)

The evidence from normal creative practice – revision – and of the commercial pressures of a press lying idle – 'no small damage' – is succinctly conveyed; while a wealth of resented useless toil is summed up in that 'trudge.' Against this detail of active experience is put the question of what sort of person would want to be a licenser. Again the specific realistic detail of the job is adduced, making its own irresistible argument:

> It cannot be deny'd but that he who is made judge to sit upon the birth, or death of books whether they may be wafted into this world, or not, had need to be a man above the common measure, both studious, learned, and judicious; there may be else no mean mistakes in the censure of what is passable or not; which is also no mean injury. If he be of such worth as behoovs him, there cannot be a more tedious and unpleasing journey-work, a greater losse of time levied upon his head, then to be made the perpetuall reader of unchosen books and pamphlets, oftimes huge volumes. There is no book that is acceptable unlesse at certain seasons; but to be enjoyn'd the reading of that at all times, and in a hand scars legible, whereof three pages would not down at any time in the fairest Print, is an imposition which I cannot beleeve how he that values time, and his own studies, or is but of a sensible nostrill should be able to endure. (530)

That Puritan commitment to the proper use of time, that experienced awareness that books are only acceptable 'at certain seasones' and cannot intelligibly be force read, and that specific, telling detail of 'in a hand scars legible' combine to demonstrate the obstacles against a valid licensing practice. Those properly qualified to perform such a task would be most unlikely to undertake it: 'we may easily foresee what kind of licencers we are to expect hereafter, either ignorant, imperious, and remisse, or basely pecuniary' (530).

To situate *Areopagitica* in its immediate context of the English revolution is in no way to reduce its significance. Its place as a lasting document in the ongoing struggle for freedom of expression is assured. But in its immediate context the argument was for freedom of expression for the radicalism of the sects, not absolute freedom in an abstract sense. The

immediate revolutionary situation was Milton's concern. And just as that encapsulation of authoritarian repression, the Roman church, was presented as the originator of licensing and censorship, likewise its advocates were excluded from any of the claims for toleration put forward:

> Yet if all cannot be of one mind, as who looks they should be? This doubtles is more wholsome, more prudent, and more Christian that many be tolerated, rather then all compell'd. I mean not tolerated Popery, and open superstition, which as it extirpats all religions and civill supremacies, so it self should be extirpat, provided first that all charitable and compassionat means be us'd to win and regain the weak and the misled: that also which is impious or evil absolutely either against faith or maners no law can possibly permit, that intends not to unlaw it self: but those neighboring differences, or rather indifferences, are what I speak of, whether in some point of doctrine or of discipline, which though they may be many, yet need not interrupt *the unity of Spirit*, if we could but find among us *the bond of peace*. (565)

This exemption of' 'Popery' from toleration occurs in the third paragraph from the end. It comes in almost as an afterthought; as if having read through what he had already written, Milton realized that his position on this point had to be made clear. But do we interpret this late explicitness as a consequence of the point's being so obvious and uncontentious that there had been no perceived need to make it before? Almost no one on the left was arguing for toleration for Catholic writings. But for legalistic precision Milton decided to spell out his position unambiguously. Or does this seeming explicitness in fact only create a doubt and suggest an ambiguity? Do we interpret Milton's exemption of Popery from toleration as concessional, as 'politically expedient', as Wittreich has suggested,[92] so that he would not lose the support of hard-line puritans, Anglicans and radicals, but not as a position he felt much commitment to? His earlier claim that 'all such tractats whether false or true are as the Prophesie of *Isaiah* was to the *Eunuch*, not to be *understood without a guide*' (519) might suggest that he would happily have tolerated Catholic publications: they caused trouble with 'any ignorant man' only when 'expounded to him by some of that Clergy'. The problem was not in the books but in the clergy, Catholic and otherwise.

92 Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., 'Milton's *Areopagitica*: Its Isocratic and Ironic Contexts', *Milton Studies*, 4 (1972), 110.

Milton's position on the extent of the freedoms he advocates has always been problematical, and this has not been the consequence simply of liberal 'misreadings' of *Areopagitica*, but of ambiguities embedded in the pamphlet. He was certainly not making an absolute case for absolute freedom: to have attempted that would have been to have advocated something that had never been the case; the extremity of such a case at such an historical moment would have invalidated the tract altogether. His argument is for the removal of prepublication censorship: he concedes the inevitable:

> I deny not, but that it is of greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how Bookes demeane themselves, as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors: For Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them … (492)

Yet this seeming stress on the punishment of books as malefactors reverses itself into an argument that books should not be summarily destroyed but should receive the respect due to human life. What begins as an apparently authoritarian law-and-order obsession turns into a case for toleration. This internal shift within the images and arguments is an ambiguity characteristic of Milton's writing in *Areopagitica*. Looked at again, we see that Milton is not advocating police measures but conceding them. He recognizes their existence; this is not the same as recommending them. The double negative formulation indicates his concessional strategy: 'I deny not, but that …' These discriminations may seem legalistic; with a father, brother and brother-in-law in the legal and related professions, they would come readily to Milton. He is significantly not writing 'we must have a vigilant eye how Bookes demeane themselves …' Rather, he is conceding the *status quo* situation that there are those 'in the church and commonwealth' who find it 'of greatest concernment' to regulate books; this is something 'I deny not'. The phrasing distances Milton himself from such concerns. He scrupulously avoids positive endorsement. In effect he can be seen as taking a modified Ranter position: not exactly lying strategically, as the Ranters were happy to do: but giving the impression of agreeing, conforming, while satisfying his own verbal conscience. After all, to say 'I deny not, but that' is only to say, I am not at this moment arguing against this, while reserving the right to deny the case at the earliest effective moment. He significantly offers no arguments for such 'concernment', no historical evidence. And to move on in the next sentence to 'as good almost kill a Man as kill a good Book; who kills a Man kills a

reasonable creature, Gods image' undercuts all that concession about 'do sharpest justice on them as malefactors'. Theoretical, abstract, concessional punishment is one thing: killing 'God's image', 'the image of God, as it were in the eye', spilling 'the pretious life-blood of a master spirit' is something else.

The tortured, negative formulation is found again in the passage arguing against the suppression of books before publication. Till the Council of Trent, Milton writes,

> Books were ever as freely admitted into the World as any other birth; the issue of the brain was no more stifl'd then the issue of the womb: no envious *Juno* sate cros-leg'd over the nativity of any mans intellectual off spring; but if it prov'd a Monster, who denies, but that it was justly burnt, or sunk into the Sea. (505)

Again the image runs through a complex of positions. The powerful right-to-life argument is confronted by the peremptory savagery of' 'justly burnt, or sunk into the Sea'. After all, who has decided that this *was* a monster necessary to be so summarily destroyed? Milton certainly avoids endorsing any such decision: 'who denies, but that it was justly burnt'. His own attitude is undeclared, but the negative expression, the raised question, allow the ready possibility that there might well be those who would deny the justice of the suppression.

A closely legalistic reading directs us to ask how real are Milton's seeming acceptances of punishments for offending books, expressed within such complex negatives. Are these in essence tactical, distanced concessions, Milton knowing full well that once the principle of non-licensing is accepted, the remaining censorship structures will ultimately be unsustainable? The final paragraph of *Areopagitica* opens with a reiteration of the existing punishments available to parliament:

> And as for regulating the Presse, let no man think to have the honour of advising ye better then your selves have done in that Order publishnext before this, that no book be Printed, unlesse the Printers and the Authors name, or at least the Printers be register'd. Those which otherwise come forth, if they be found mischievous and libellous, the fire and the executioner will be the timeliest and the most effectual remedy, that mans prevention can use. (569)

Once again the seeming hard line is not as clear-cut as it might at first glance appear. Sirluck points out,

> There is an ambiguity here. It was a legal offence for books to be published anonymously or without the publisher's imprint, even though they were neither 'mischievous' nor libellous; it was another offence to publish 'mischief or libel, even though the publication carried the name of author and publisher. (569n)

We might add the reminder that *Areopagitica* itself was not registered; and though it carried the author's name, it did not carry the printer's – which from Milton's 'at least the Printers' might have been thought to have been the basic requirement he put forward, more important than carrying the author's name. The cited methods of 'regulating the Presse' are, in the very work asserting them, deliberately not observed. As for 'the fire', we might recall, as the Parliament to whom the pamphlet was addressed would surely have recalled, that Herbert Palmer had suggested in a sermon preached before Parliament and the Westminster Assembly on 13 August 1644, that Milton's *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* was 'deserving to be burnt'.[93] We are justified in wondering how committed Milton was to such a 'remedy'. We might notice, too, that though the earlier negative formulations are not repeated, a no less cumbersome and tortuous phraseology is used: 'And as for regulating the Presse, let no man think to have the honour of advising ye better then your selves have done.' Does this allow us to consider that some man may have advised parliament better, but don't let him think to have any honour from it; how could parliament allow that anyone could think better than itself? Is this a sardonic way of saying that there is no honour to be had by thinking up schemes of regulating the press, anyway, that it is something best unregulated? To say that 'the fire and the executioner will be the timeliest and the most effectual remedy, that mans prevention can use' is to say no more than they will be a quick and effective destructive solution, if destruction, prevention, is what is required. It is scrupulously not endorsing the remedy. Milton employed the same sort of circularity, significantly free of moral endorsement, when he had Manoah blandly declare in *Samson Agonistes,* 'Samson hath quit himself / Like Samson, and heroicly hath finished / A life heroic' (lines 1709–11),
leaving hanging there the question of whether that sort of violent destructive heroism is morally good, in any way recommendable. And to continue from 'the fire and the

93 William Riley Parker, *Milton* (Oxford, 1968), vol. 1, 263.

executioner' to, in the next sentence, 'For this *authentic* Spanish policy of licencing books' (569) simply, or cunningly, reminds the reader that fire and executioners were the hideous instruments of the Inquisition, no more endorsable than the licensing explicitly opposed.

These minute subtleties of argumentative sleight of hand, which might be overlooked by the cursory reader, are paralleled by devious tricks that can be overlooked because of the much larger scale on which they work. The historical evidence that Milton adduces from classical, biblical and medieval times is supremely irrelevant; before the invention of printing the labour involved in transcribing manuscripts was its own system of control. It is only with the widespread dissemination of books that the written word becomes a wide-scale threat to social and religious order. The arguments from authority also turn out to be other than they seem, as Sirluck noted:

> The second argument, which proposes to show that the promiscuous reading of bad along with good books is beneficial, seems at first glance, with its citations from prophets, apostles, and fathers, to be an argument from authority. The reverse, however, is true: the primary function of these citations is to free the issue from the influence of miscellaneous Christian authorities (an arbitration not much to Milton's taste, nor, perhaps, to the advantage of his present position). The 'authority' of one primitive father is opposed to that of another in such a way as to prevent either from being decisive, and hence the way is cleared for submitting the issue to the test of reason alone. (If, in this matching of opinions, Milton's selection makes the preponderance seem to be in favor of unrestricted reading, that is only a secondary – although certainly not accidental – result of the method.) (164–5)

Milton's radical contempt for argument from authority is shown in that deadpan way in which a comic anecdote is introduced in the same manner as if it were a revered authority along with all the Biblical and classical citation: 'that gallant man who thought to pound up the crows by shutting his Parkgate' (520). Authorities can be found for any position. This, of course, is Milton's argument. In the end the individual has to make up his or her own mind: we cannot let authorities do it for us, hand over our morality to a hired divine and leave it at that. This is the meaning of that most frequently quoted passage:

> I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd and unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary. (515)

Although Milton is arguing for a single specific aim – the abolition of licensing – this commitment to 'triall is by what is contrary' informs the whole pamphlet. His method is truly dialectical. Image after image embodies its own necessary rethinking, its own resituation. His citations from authority serve to challenge the very concept of argument from authority. His hypothetical logical exaggerations redefine themselves as the literal recording of appalling reality. These are dynamic devices. The paradoxes – a speech for the liberty of printing – do not remain as static wit; they generate an immense charge of redefining intellectual energy. Books are presented as alive: never as reified, alienated commodities. Books embody ideas, truth, and truth is dynamic: hence the imagery of life-blood, bodies, fountains. And these material images are ennobling; there are no concepts of transcending the body, the image of God, here. Life is a value; books are valuable because their ideas are alive. It is such life that still speaks to us through *Areopagitica* three centuries and more after its first publication.

Milton's Radical Epic

John Milton's commitment to social justice, to a primal egalitarianism, is basic throughout his literary production. A consistent radical vision is present from his earliest work. The indictment of the unequal distribution of wealth in *A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634* (*Comus*) is one of the great dramatic utterances of the English literary heritage. The Lady declares:

> If every just man that now pines with want
> Had but a moderate and beseeming share
> Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury
> Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
> Nature's full blessings would be well-dispensed
> In unsuperfluous even proportion,
> And she no whit encumbered with her store,
> And then the giver would be better thanked,
> His praise due paid … (768–76)[94]

The radicalism is unambiguous and incontrovertible.[95]

Three years later, in 'Lycidas', Milton denounces the corrupt clergy of the reactionary Church of England, indicting their careerism, greed and idleness.[96] 'The pilot of the Galilean Lake' (St Peter) 'stern bespake':

> How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
> Enow of such as for their bellies' sake,
> Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold?
> Of other care they little reckoning make
> Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,

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[94] John Carey and Alastair Fowler, ed., *The Poems of John Milton* (London, 1968).

[95] See Saad El-Gabalawy, 'Christian Communism in *Utopia*, *King Lear* and *Comus*', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 47 (1978), 228–38.

[96] 'An expression of the same spirit which had long been making itself heard in the Puritan pulpit and which was at the moment clamoring in the reckless pamphlets of Prynne and Lilburne' – William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (1938) (Philadelphia, 1972), 288. On the radicalism of Milton's early poetry see David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London, 1984), and Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1987).

And shove away the worthy bidden guest;
Blind mouths! That scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw,
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoll'n with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread … (113–27)

As well as clergy the indictment of bad shepherds includes academics and poets, all of those whose teaching lacks substance and leaves their listeners 'swoll'n with wind'.[97]

With the outbreak of the revolution, Milton became a prolific and increasingly radical pamphleteer and polemicist.[98]

It is often said that Milton took a radical step in writing *Paradise Lost* in English rather than in Latin. But the vernacular epic was well established with Dante, Camoëns and Spenser by the seventeenth century and to have published a Latin epic at this late stage, 1667, would have been absurd. One of the major projects of the English revolution had been to complete the access to major texts begun with the introduction of the English-language Bible into churches in 1532. The publishing explosion consequent upon the breakdown of censorship in the 1640s resulted in the large-scale availability in English translation of works previously restricted to the privileged élite educated in Latin.

The radical aspect of *Paradise Lost* resides in the choice of theme and in the redefinition of epic values. The epic characteristically celebrated the tribal group or nation. A narrow, local patriotism informs Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Milton rejects that tradition, and chooses the theme of the Fall of Adam and Eve. It is a foundation myth but what is founded is the human race, not a particular nation. And the focus is on the loss of Paradise rather than on the establishment of a dynasty. Milton had once considered writing an

[97] David Daiches, *Milton* (London, 1957), 76–92; Catherine Belsey, *John Milton: Language, Gender, Power* (Oxford, 1988), 28.
[98] The best account of Milton's political career is in Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1977. See also David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner, ed., *Politics, Poetics and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose* (Cambridge, 1990), and Thomas N. Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue: English Political Literature, 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1992).

epic on King Arthur; but the collapse of the English republic and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the failure of the English revolution, made him disinclined to celebrate his native land.

But as always with Milton, it is dangerous to make too dogmatic or simplistic an assertion. It is tempting to say that his choice of the theme of Paradise represents a refusal to write about Britain. At the same time, however, to write of Paradise was indeed to write of Britain. The slogan of the English Peasants' Revolt of 1381 took Paradise as its touchstone:

> When Adam delved and Eve span
> Who was then the gentleman?

The restoration of primal social equality and just distribution of wealth was the aim of these pioneering English revolutionaries. The image of honest labour – Adam with spade, Eve with distaff – survives in woodcarvings in numerous English churches. The slogan underpins *Paradise Lost.*

The concept of England as Paradise is recurrent in the century before Milton's epic. The image is used by Dr Dee in a letter to Queen Elizabeth in 1588, responding to her 'calling me, Mr Kelly, and our families home, into your British Earthly Paradise and Monarchy incomparable'.[99]

The image is especially current in radical contexts. In 1579 John Stubbs attacked the proposed marriage of Queen Elizabeth to the Duke of Anjou in *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf whereinto England is Like to be swallowed by another French Marriage:* he called the Duke 'the old serpent in shape of a man whose sting is in his mouth and who doth endeavour to seduce our Eve that she and we may lose this English Paradise'. Stubbs, and the bookseller Page who distributed the pamphlet, paid the penalty – 'their right hands were struck off with a cleaver driven through the wrist with a beetle'.[100] The savage maiming of these protestant radicals lies behind the imagery of *Areopagitica*.

Probably the most famous usage is in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, when John of Gaunt refers to Britain as 'This other Eden, demi-paradise' (II. i. 42). The context is revolutionary. *Richard II* dramatizes the overthrow of a monarch. Queen Elizabeth took the point,

[99] Facsimile in Charlotte Fell Smith, *John Dee* (London, 1909).
[100] Roger Howell, *Sir Philip Sidney: The Shepherd Knight* (London, 1968), 72–3.

remarking ‘Know that I am Richard’. The play was contracted to be performed the day before Essex’s unsuccessful rebellion.

Andrew Marvell uses the concept in the 1650s in ‘Upon Appleton House’, the poem he wrote commemorating the estate of the retired commander-in-chief of the Parliamentary army:

> Oh Thou, that dear and happy Isle
> The Garden of the World ere while,
> Thou *Paradise* of four Seas,
> Which *Heaven* planted us to please,
> But, to exclude the World, did guard
> With watry if not flaming Sword;
> What luckless Apple did we tast,
> To make us Mortal, and Thee Wast? (321–8)[101]

England as a lost Paradise is a potent image for the English radical. There is no doubt it is a calculated sub-text in *Paradise Lost.* When Satan proposes a mission from Hell to search out Paradise, Eden is paraphrased as ‘The happy isle’ (II. 410). Britain is clearly denoted.

Milton, then, rejected a nationalist commemoration of Britain in favour of a cosmic epic, preceding and transcending nationalism. Yet simultaneously he inscribed a potent British radical image that suggests England could have been, indeed once was, a Paradise, and he indicates in the course of the poem the forces that have spoiled it – the abandonment of common ownership, the development of the value systems that he identifies with Satan and Hell. So the English radical theme is reasserted in the cosmic epic.

The radical departure from traditional epic practice here is significant. Compare Milton’s practice with Bakhtin’s definition of the epic:

> The epic as a genre in its own right may, for our purposes, be characterized by three constituent features: (1) a national epic past – in Goethe’s and Schiller’s terminology the ‘absolute past’ – serves as the subject for the epic; (2) national tradition (not personal experience and the free thought that grows out of it) serves as the source for

[101] *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston, 1974); *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. H. H. Margoliouth, revised by Pierre Legouis and E. E. Duncan-Jones (Oxford, 1971).

> the epic; (3) an absolute epic distance separates the epic world from contemporary reality, that is, from time in which the singer (the author and his audience) lives.[102]

The nationalist past and tradition of Bakhtin's points (1) and (2) are significantly absent. And rather than preserving an absolute epic distance, Milton pointedly introduces contemporary references: in the way the world of Hell parallels his contemporary world, in the references to parliamentary practice, to gunpowder and to imperial trading adventures which we shall discuss later, and in the explicit reference to contemporary and near-contemporary figures like Galileo, whom Milton had visited ('the Tuscan artist', I. 288) and Columbus ('Such of late / Columbus found', IX. 1115–16).

Milton's systematic redefinition of epic is characteristic of his strategy. He removes the nationalistic component, redefining his epic as cosmic, and then reinserts a contemporary nationalist reference to England as the Paradisal 'happy isle'. In a similar way he opens the poem with a vision of splendid epic rebellion, only to redefine the nature of rebellion, deepening our thinking about rebellion and epic.

At first glance Satan is the archetypal rebel, resisting the arbitrary authoritarianism of God. This was the reading of *Paradise Lost* that appealed to the Romantic poets – Blake and Shelley especially – and that continued through to William Empson.[103] The poem records Satan's rebellion in Heaven; it opens with Satan and his followers in defeat in Hell, and follows their revenge on God in Satan's destruction of Adam and Eve.

The destruction of Adam and Eve and the ensuing human race is markedly less admirable than the heroic speeches of resistance, and it is this that requires our rethinking of the nature of Satan's epic heroism. Satan as the master of lies is characteristically and inevitably ambiguous, and Milton exploits this ambiguity to make the reader rethink. And by an extraordinary, outrageous and absolutely persuasive reversal of received thinking, Milton redefines revolution. He confronts the established, ruling-class ideology head on: you are the rebels, he declares, you are the perpetuators of revolution against divine authority, against the good. The radical activists on earth are not rebels, they are the emissaries of divine truth attempting to restore the primal state.[104] So the poem opens

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[102] 'Epic and Novel', in M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, 1981), 13.
[103] John T. Shawcross, ed., *Milton, 1732–1801: The Critical Heritage* (London, 1972); William Empson, *Milton's God* (London, 1965).
[104] Fredric Jameson, 'Religion and Ideology', in Francis Barker et al., ed., *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century* (Colchester, 1981), 129.

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing heavenly Muse … (II. 1–6)

The emphatic positioning of 'Restore us' at the poem's beginning is an extraordinary assertion. The word 'restore' had been appropriated by the monarchical reaction that had destroyed the English revolution and brought the 'Restoration' of 1660. Milton seizes it back. The true restoration is to the primal Paradisal state. Monarchy is the rebellion against God.

In the course of the poem Milton spells this out. Satan is unambiguously identified as 'The monarch' (II. 467) who uses 'The tyrant's plea' (IV. 394). He sits 'on a throne of a royal state' (II. 1) in parody of 'the almighty Father … High throned above all highth' (III. 56–8).

Satan is traditionally the first, the archetypal rebel. Milton simultaneously presents him as the archetypal monarch. Monarchy is the fruit of Satan's rebellion, an institution invented in a futile attempt to imitate the divine. It was not something established by God. Humanity was established as equal in Paradise; there were no social ranks. This is spelled out in the culminating book of the epic when Adam is shown a vision of the career of Nimrod (XII. 24–37).

The ideal social model is 'fair equality, fraternal state'. But Nimrod 'will arrogate dominion undeserved / Over his brethren' (XII. 27–8) just as Satan aspired 'To set himself in glory above his peers' (I. 39). It is a rebellion against the divinely instituted egalitarianism. Nimrod's name derives from the Hebrew verb 'to rebel'; but this arch rebel, like every ruling élite, accuses others of rebellion.

Adam's response to this vision is to reassert the original divine establishment of human equality:

O execrable son so to aspire
Above his brethren, to himself assuming
Authority usurped, from God not given:
He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl

> Dominion absolute; that right we hold
> By his donation; but man over men
> He made not lord; such title to himself
> Reserving, human left from human free. (XII. 64–71)

The assertion has a further radical resonance. Milton is here offering the same socio-political interpretation of Genesis as the Diggers made in 1649. The Diggers had attempted to found a communist society. Their manifesto, *The True Levellers' Standard Advanced: or the State of Community Opened and Presented to the Sons of Men*, turns to the Genesis account of Creation to define it.

> In the beginning of time, the great creator Reason made the earth to be a common treasury, to preserve the beasts, birds, fishes and man, the lord that was to govern this creation, for man had domination given to him, over the beasts, birds and fishes: but not one word was spoken in the beginning, that one branch of mankind should rule over another. And the reason is this. Every single man, male and female, is a perfect creature of himself.[105]

In the same year Milton wrote in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* his defence of the judicial execution of Charles I:

> No man who knows aught, can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were born free, being the image and resemblance of God himself, and were by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey; and that they liv'd so. Till from the root of Adam's transgression, falling among themselves to doe wrong and violence, and foreseeing that such courses must needs tend to the destruction of them all, they agreed by common league to bind each other from mutual injury, and joyntly to defend themselves against any that gave disturbance or opposition to such agreement. Hence came Cities, Townes and Commonwealths. And because no faith in all was found sufficiently binding, they saw it needful to ordaine som authoritie, that

105 Christopher Hill, ed., *Winstanley: The Law of Freedom and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth, 1973), 150.

> might restraine by force and punishment what was violated against peace and common right …[106]

Mankind was not born to dominion over mankind. Structures of rule and control were established after the Fall, as a direct consequence of the Fall, of Satan's destruction of the original Paradisal state.

Milton's strategy here is important. He is asserting that a radical vision is primary, not reactive. It has always been the argument of the ruling class that they are the natural rulers and than any radical challenge is reactive, disruptive, subversive, rebellious. Milton resolutely confronts this position. As he wrote in *Areopagitica* (1644):

> There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. 'Tis their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince; yet all must be suppressed which is not found in their syntagma. They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dissevered pieces which are yet wanting to the body of Truth. (608)

The revolutionary programme, the radical agenda, is the restoration of primal unity, primal truth, primal equality.[107]

Like the Diggers' settlement, not only was the original created Paradise one of 'fair equality, fraternal state' (XII. 26), it was also one of common ownership. There was no private property, earth was 'a common treasury'. Celebrating the institution of marriage, Milton writes:

> Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source
> Of human offspring, sole propriety
> In Paradise of all things common else. (IV. 750–2)

The Ranters of the English Revolution had extended their communism to sexuality. Milton, like the Diggers, opposed this. But he emphatically asserts that in every other sphere there

[106] *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe et al., 8 volumes (New Haven and London, 1953–82), 3.198–9.
[107] See '*Areopagitica*: Liberty for the Sects', supra.

was no private possession, 'all things common else'. It is a brief assertion, half a line in an epic. But it is unambiguously stated and at no point retracted. Unobtrusive enough to slip past the censors, who carefully scrutinized this work of a high-profile revolutionary, it spells out unassailably the social model of Paradise.[108]

Moreover it is not a property obsessed, materialist life in Paradise. The emphasis is on simplicity, sustainability. When the archangel Raphael visits, Adam

> walks forth, without more train
> Accompanied than with his own complete
> Perfections, in himself was all his state,
> More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits
> On princes, when their rich retinue long
> Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold
> Dazzles the crowd, and sets them all agape. (V. 351–7)

Paradisal existence is defined as one of private domesticity in contrast with earthly ruling-class corruptions, with the 'tedious pomp' designed to mystify the ruled. Milton's contempt for this public, political show is caught in the way the grooms are 'besmear'd' with gold. In contrast, when Adam and Eve entertain Raphael the emphasis is on nature rather than artifice:

> Raised of grassy turf
> Their table was, and mossy seats had round,
> And on her ample square from side to side
> All autumn piled, though spring and autumn here
> Danced hand in hand. A while discourse they hold;
> No fear lest dinner cool … (V. 391–6)

The stress is on the advantages of Paradisal primitivism. The food is freshly, freely on hand and does not need to be cooked. As for utensils, Adam and Eve simply pick fruits and use the shells.

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[108] On the Diggers and other radical groups of the English revolution, see Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (Harmondsworth, 1975); Eduard Bernstein, *Cromwell and Communism: Socialism and Democracy in the Great English Revolution* (1930) (Nottingham, 1980); and David Petergorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Revolution* (London, 1940).

The savoury pulp they chew, and in the rind
Still as they thirsted scoop the brimming stream. (IV. 335–6)

There is no unnecessary commodity production. There are no markets, no bartering, no cash transactions, no Vanity Fair.

Importantly, Adam and Eve are vegetarian. They do not eat flesh or fish. There is no death, no killing in Paradise till after the Fall. They live in friendship and harmony with the animals.

About them frisking played
All beasts of the earth, since wild, and of all chase
In wood or wilderness, forest or den;
Sporting the lion ramped, and in his paw
Dandled the kid; bears, tigers, ounces, pards,
Gambolled before them, the unwieldy elephant
To make them mirth used all his might, and wreathed
His lithe proboscis … (IV. 340–7)

It is a vision of primal harmony, the peaceable kingdom. Humanity's relationship with nature is an indicator of its relationships with itself. Political radicalism has at various times foregrounded this holistic vision. The vegetarianism of numerous radical figures – of Shelley, of Dr Shrapnel in Meredith's *Beauchamp's Career*, of George Bernard Shaw, of Jack Lindsay – has tended all too often to be marginalized. The emergence of an environmental politics has brought these issues back into focus. They are all part of a whole vision: freedom, equality, environmental concern, vegetarianism, anti-militarism, common ownership.

Flesh-eating is introduced after the Fall. Sin instructs Death 'Thou therefore on these herbs, and fruits, and flowers / Feed first, on each beast next, and fish, and fowl …' (X. 603–4) Death declares

such a scent I draw
Of carnage, prey innumerable, and taste
The savour of death from all things there that live. (X. 267–9)

The introduction of death is in terms associated with eating and appetite: ‘prey’, ‘taste’, ‘savour’.

> So saying, with delight he snuffed the smell
> Of mortal change on earth. As when a flock
> Of ravenous fowl, though many a league remote,
> Against the day of battle, to a field,
> Where armies lie encamped, come flying, lured
> With scent of living carcasses designed
> For death, the following day, in bloody fight.
> So scented the grim feature, and upturned
> His nostril wide into the murky air,
> Sagacious of his quarry from so far. (X. 272–81)

The way Death ‘snuffed the smell’ again identifies mortality, the Fall, and flesh-eating. Carnivorousness is the defining quality of Death, and Death is introduced to Earth by the Fall. Flesh-eating is one of contemporary human habits alien to Paradise before the Fall. Nimrod, the hunter, is the first earthly tyrant. The other associated activity likewise alien is warfare, and Milton’s rejection of militarism is one of the most radical features of his epic. It is here closely linked with Death’s carnivorousness.

The possibilities for presenting Paradise are various; they all clearly depend upon a vision of social good. The Old Man of the Mountains, familiar from the accounts by Marco Polo and Sir Thomas Mandeville, offered a paradise of flowing drinks and enticing young women to the hashish-entranced assassins he trained. Milton’s Paradise is markedly not a place of rest and recreation leave for killers. It is not a paradise of idleness and indulgence. There was sexuality: that is stressed in radical opposition to those who would deny it. And centrally there is work. It is not exploitative, alienated labour; it is work without undue pressures, work that is part of the totality of Adam and Eve’s existence, work that stimulates the appetite and that makes rest a delight rather than a tedium.

> They sat them down, and after no more toil
> Of their sweet gardening labour than sufficed

To recommend cool zephyr, and made ease
More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite
More grateful, to their supper fruits they fell … (IV. 327–31)

It is work, but it is not burdensome: this point is reiterated:

Yet not so strictly hath our Lord imposed
Labour, as to debar us when we need
Refreshment, whether food, or talk … (IX. 235–7)

In Milton's radical vision work is central to human life. Paradise is a place of work. He does not offer an aristocratic ideal of indulgence and diversion. It is not a leisure-class vision of idleness. There are no servants in Paradise, no handmaidens, no slaves, no robots, no labour-saving devices. Labour is a central part of Paradise. Milton is in accord with Karl Marx here. As Marx wrote in *Capital*

> As creator of use-values, as useful labour, labour is a necessary condition of human existence, and one that is independent of the forms of human society; it is, through all the ages, a necessity imposed by nature itself, for without it there can be no interchange of materials between man and nature – in a word, no life.[109]

This is the era of the country house poem, and Paradise is 'a happy rural seat of various view' (IV. 247). But it is markedly distinguished from the ruling class vision of Ben Jonson's 'Penshurst', where the tenants do all the work, or even of Andrew Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House', where Lord Fairfax may take the salute from the flowers, but we do not see him bedding them out, or giving a hand at mowing the hay like Leo Tolstoy's Levin in *War and Peace.*

In contrast to Paradise, Milton presents Hell as materialist, technological, sophisticated, hierarchical and militaristic. The stress is on Pandemonium's architectural splendour, on the intimidating buildings of an absolutist regime.

Built like a temple, where pilasters round

[109] Karl Marx, *Capital*, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul (London, 1930), vol. 1, 12.

Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven,
The roof was fretted gold. Not Babilon
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
Equalled in all their glories … (I. 713–19)

The inspiration for such achievement is Mammon (whose name is the Aramaic word for riches):

Mammon led them on,
Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
From heaven; for even in heaven his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed
In vision beatific: by him first
Men also, and by his suggestion taught,
Ransacked the centre, and with impious hands
Rifled the bowels of their mother earth
For treasures better hid. Soon had his crew
Opened into the hill a spacious wound
And digged out ribs of gold. Let none admire
That riches grow in hell; that soil may best
Deserve the precious bane. (I. 678–92)

Milton's critique is unambiguous. It is greed for material riches, represented by Mammon, that inspires the mining enterprises. Milton presents earth as a sensate being – 'their mother earth' – an ancient concept that is once again part of an environmental politics. Rifling the bowels is what the executioners did when hanging, drawing and quartering. Digging out ribs of gold represents a Hellish parody of the creation of Eve. Once seen as benightedly anti-technological, Milton's concerns here at the destruction and desecration of 'mother earth' can now be properly resituated as prescient radical environmentalism. The first mining

enterprises are Hellish. It might be objected that these represented episodes of mining occur in Heaven, when the first cannon are made, and in Hell, when Pandemonium is constructed, rather than on earth. But Milton stresses a continuity throughout his cosmos. And whereas the Paradise he shows us is an unspoiled primal state, Hell represents a pre-vision of what the earth was to become with its mines, buildings, parliament, military, and false philosophers. Hell is consistently presented in comparison with earthly civilizations: the epic similes serve to introduce Fiesole, Valdarno, Norwegian hills, Pelorus, Etna, the Red Sea, the Rhine, the Danube, Egypt, Gibraltar, Libya and so on. The analogies and comparisons serve to indicate that Hell is the site of Milton's critique of the modern world.

Hellish technology is closely associated with repressive and destructive aims, the military–industrial complex as one U.S. president put it. Pandemonium is the venue for the puppet parliament of Satan's archetypal tyranny, in which the imperialist conquest and exploitation of Paradise is proposed and approved. Before their fall, Satan's crew develop cannons and gunpowder in heaven. They are the first armaments manufacturers.

Raphael spells out the parallel between Satanic and human military technology to Adam:

> In future days, if malice should abound,
> Some one intent on mischief, or inspired
> With devilish machination might devise
> Like instrument to plague the sons of men
> For sin, on war and mutual slaughter bent. (VI. 502–6)

The cannon are first used in the war in Heaven. Backed by this weapons technology, Satan launches his archetypal imperialist adventure from Hell, the conquest of 'this new world' (II. 403). Beelzebub proposes the scheme as a revenge on God for their defeat:

> either with hell fire
> To waste his whole creation, or possess
> All as our own, and drive as we were driven,
> The puny habitants, or if not drive,
> Seduce them to our party … (II. 364–8)

As it happens, seduction rather than force is the successful methodology. Satan is situated firmly in that interface of disinformation, armaments, and drug trading so familiar in the late twentieth century. Is it mere happy coincidence or a chilling prophecy of Irangate and the contras, that Satan's troops assemble in 'The quarters of the north' (V. 689)?

Setting off on his mission of destruction, Satan's voyage is compared to that of a trading fleet

> Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles
> Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring
> Their spicy drugs … (II. 638–40)

The association with the colonial ventures of European powers is spelled out.[110]

Of course the annotators will remind us that drugs means dried products. But Milton knew about drugs in the sense of narcotics and addictive substances. He notes the use of betel nuts by the Javanese in his *Commonplace Book*. His contemporary Thomas Shadwell was one of the first English poets with an addiction to opium – so Dryden writes in *MacFlecknoe*: 'His temples, last, with poppies were o'erspread / That nodding seemed to consecrate his head' (126–7). Van Linschoten's account of his voyage to the East Indies, translated into English in 1598, offers one of the earliest Western accounts of bangue, cannabis, and its use by the military and exploited labourers:

> The common women use it when they meane to have a mans companie, to be merrie, and to set all care aside. It was invented by Captaines and souldiers, when they had layne long in the field, continually waking and with great travell, they desiring again to comfort themselves, thereby to settle their braines doe use Bangue, in such manner as is aforesaid … It causeth such as eat it, to reele and looke as if they were drunke, and half foolish, doing nothing but laugh and bee merrie, as long as it worketh in their bodies. It is verie much used by the Indians, and likewise by some Portingales, but most by the slaves thereby to forget their labour: to conclude it is a small comfort to melancholy.[111]

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[110] See J. Martin Evans, 'Milton's Imperial Epic', in P. G. Stanwood, ed., *Of Poetry and Politics: New Essays on Milton and His World* (Binghamton, New York, 199).

[111] *The Voyage of John Huyghen Van Linschoten to the East Indies*, ed. A. Tiele, vol. 2 (London, 1885),115–16.

Britain's trading, exploring and settling activities were well under way in India and North America by the time Milton was writing *Paradise Lost.* It is often argued that any indictment of colonialism is a specifically anti-Spanish product of the Protestant anti-Catholic propaganda embodied in such tracts as *The Tears of the Poor Indians*, which Milton's nephew translated. But there is no need to restrict matters so narrowly. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, and Jonathan Swift's denunciation of a modern colony in *Gulliver's Travels*, were soon to appear.[112] For Milton not to have put in an imperial context into the comprehensive vision of an epic would have been remiss. Developing colonialism was a fact of the seventeenth-century world as economic globalization is of today's world. This was what distinguished it from the earlier period. The epic that deals with the events of the very beginnings of human history firmly locates its reference after the Fall in the present time. Both East and West Indies are specified. After the Fall, conscious of their nakedness, Adam and Eve

> chose
> The fig-tree, not that kind for fruit renowned,
> But such as at this day to Indians known
> In Malabar or Decan spreads her arms
> Branching so broad and long …
>
> those leaves
> They gathered, broad as Amazonian targe,
> And with what skill they had, together sewed,
> To gird their waist, vain covering if to hide
> Their guilt and dreaded shame; O how unlike
> To that first naked glory. Such of late
> Columbus found the American so girt
> With feathered cincture, naked else and wild
> Among the trees on isles and woody shores. (IX. 1100–18)

112 Michael Wilding, 'The Politics of *Gulliver's Travels*', in R. F. Brissenden, ed., *Studies in the Eighteenth Century–II* (Canberra, 1973), 303-22, reprinted in Wilding, *Social Visions*, *Sydney Studies in Society & Culture*, 8 (Sydney, 1993).

They choose the fig tree for covering, ‘such as at this day to Indians known, / In Malabar or Decan’. ‘Such of late / Columbus found the American’. ‘At this day’, ‘such of late’: the fallen Adam and Eve are identified with the newly colonized peoples of India and America of Milton’s contemporary world. And if they are to be compared to Indian and American peoples, then the invading colonizer Satan is implicitly but inescapably to be identified with the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and English merchant adventurers, and the values of those adventurers are to be registered as Satanic. Satan reaches earth from Hell by flight, but the recurrent images describing his progress are of a sea voyage. This, in an era before air travel and space travel, locates him pointedly in contemporary analogies: the European voyages of trading and colonization.

The decision to make the attack on earth was ratified by the parliament of Hell. At one level the motivation is revenge on God for the defeat in the war in Heaven. But at the same time Milton presents it as a thoroughly political decision, approved by the decision of a modern parliament.

The political context offers yet another radical indictment of contemporary practice. The parliament of Hell is a sham, the democratic institution a mystifying illusion. The first indication of this is given at the end of Book I when the fallen angels swarm to ‘a solemn council’ (I. 755). In order for them all to enter they have to reduce their size.

> Thus incorporeal spirits to smallest forms
> Reduced their shapes immense, and were at large,
> Though without number still amidst the hall
> Of that infernal court. But far within
> And in their own dimensions like themselves
> The great seraphic lords and cherubim
> In close recess and secret conclave sat
> A thousand demi-gods on golden seats,
> Frequent and full. (I. 789–97)

The members of the council retain their full size and consult in secret; the crowd remains outside, reduced; a physical reduction that expresses the reduction of their significance to the political decision making. As for the council of a thousand, far too many for any meaningful consultation, only four get to speak: Moloch, Belial, Mammon and

Beelzebub. It is a blatant travesty of decision-making, and a powerful indictment of parliamentary practice.[113] Moreover, of those four speakers, Beelzebub was merely proposing what Satan himself had already decided – the attack on Paradise:

> Thus Beelzebub
> Pleaded his devilish counsel, first devised
> By Satan, and in part proposed. (II. 378–80)

Critical attention has tended to focus on the rhetorical splendour of the individual speeches. This has its appropriateness, for they are splendid; but their objective function is to divert attention from the realities of the decision-making process. The decision has already been made secretly, in a private deal. The parliamentary debate is a theatrical masquerade. Such is Milton's radical analysis of contemporary political practice.[114]

The epic poem traditionally has a hero, a powerful protagonist on whose adventures the action revolves. Satan is the obvious candidate for the role in *Paradise Lost*, but how can the embodiment of evil be the hero? Milton's strategy, of course, is to re-evaluate the nature of heroism.[115] Satan, with his great physical strength, his undoubted military courage, his commitment to revenge and his refusal to surrender, embodies a large part of the traditional heroic qualities. Verbal and metaphorical parallels and allusions to the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* are recurrent.[116] But how admirable are these traditional heroic qualities? Is military might something we want to admire and enshrine? Satan responds to Abdiel in the war in Heaven, defending 'The strife which thou call'st evil, but we style / The strife of glory …' (VI. 289–90). It is Milton's strategy to present this traditional 'strife of glory' in a questioning way, to show it clearly as the strife of evil. By giving the role of epic hero to Satan, Milton redefines the traditional celebration of military might as the commemoration of military atrocities.

It is a radical rewriting of the epic, a confrontation of the whole cultural tradition, and a refusal of contemporary social practice. It is a rejection of conventional, official values

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113 Merritt Y. Hughes, 'Satan and the "Myth" of the Tyrant', in Hughes, *Ten perspectives on Milton* (New Haven, 1965), 187.

114 See further, '*Paradise Lost*: The Parliament of Hell' in Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth*.

115 John M. Steadman, *Milton and the Renaissance Hero* (Oxford, 1967); Michael Wilding, *Milton's Paradise Lost* (Sydney, 1969).

116 Davis P. Harding, *The Club of Hercules: Studies in the Classical Background of Paradise Lost* (Urbana, 1962).

towards militarism as challenging today as it was when written. The rejection is explicit in the invocation to Book IX, where Milton describes himself as

> Not sedulous by nature to indite
> Wars, hitherto the only argument
> Heroic deemed, chief mastery to dissect
> With long and tedious havoc fabled knights
> In battles feigned; the better fortitude
> Of patience and heroic martyrdom
> Unsung; or to describe races and games,
> Or tilting furniture, emblazoned shields,
> Impreses quaint, caparisons and steeds;
> Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights
> At joust and tournament; then marshalled feast
> Served up in hall with sewers, and senseschals;
> The skill of artifice or office mean,
> Not that which justly gives heroic name
> To person or to poem. Me of these
> Nor skilled nor studious ... (IX. 27–42)

He is not only not 'skilled' in the militarism and ruling-class pageantry of the traditional heroic poem, he is not 'studious' in it either. It is not something on which he has spent time or in which he intends to develop his skills.

There is indeed 'long and tedious havoc' in *Paradise Lost*, but it is grotesque.[117] The war in Heaven begins with full epic clichés:

> Now waved their fiery swords, and in the air
> Made horrid circles; two broad suns their shields
> Blazed opposite, while expectation stood
> In horror … (VI. 304–7)

[117] Arnold Stein, *Answerable Style* (Minneapolis, 1953).

But it soon becomes mock epic or anti-epic. Satan introduces the cannon ‘scoffing in ambiguous words’ (VI. 568):

> Vanguard, to right and left the front unfold;
> That all may see who hate us, how we seek
> Peace and composure, and with open breast
> Stand ready to receive them, if they like
> Our overture, and turn not back perverse;
> But that I doubt, however witness heaven,
> Heaven, witness thou anon, while we discharge
> Freely our part; ye who appointed stand
> Do as you have in charge, and briefly touch
> What we propound, and loud that all may hear. (VI. 558–67)

After the onslaught Belial remarks:

> in like gamesome mood,
> Leader, the terms we sent were terms of weight,
> Of hard contents, and full of force urged home. (VI. 620–2)

The punning on the technical terms of cannonry, on the firing procedures and on the weighty cannon-balls help bring the episode close to burlesque. The response of the good angels increases that tendency. They throw back hills.

> They plucked the seated hills with all their load,
> Rocks, waters, woods, and by the shaggy tops
> Up lifting bore them in their hands … (VI. 644–6)

The episode has moved beyond epic splendor to excess – an excess of technology, an excess of punning, an excess of sheer brute force:

> So hills amid the air encountered hills
> Hurled to and fro with jaculation dire,

That under ground they fought in dismal shade … (VI. 664–6)

There is a deliberately grotesque aspect to this, an absurdist critique of epic warfare.

The focus of the epic has moved from the traditional single-combat encounter, with all its alleged nobility, to absurdity: an absurdity of labored puns, an absurdity of child-like mud-throwing, an absurdity of overkill. This is not an episode that ennobles military conflict. And Milton's final point is that nothing is achieved, nothing is proved. Even though the good angels have right on their side, warfare resolves nothing. The Almighty Father says to the Son:

sore hath been their fight,
As likeliest was, when two such foes met armed;
For to themselves I left them, and thou know'st,
Equal in their creation they were formed,
Save what sin hath impaired, which yet hath wrought
Insensibly, for I suspend their doom;
Whence in perpetual fight they needs must last
Endless, and no solution will be found:
War wearied hath performed what war can do … (VI. 687–95)

This is no war to end all wars, for there never was or could be such. This is the archetypal war in which nothing is resolved, nothing is achieved. There is nothing admirable, nothing noble, nothing glorious. It is just 'long and tedious havoc', the stuff of traditional epic poetry.

Just as Satan's archetypal monarchical tyranny is shown in its first earthly manifestation in Nimrod, so his archetypal militarism is shown in its first earthly manifestation with the giants. This thematic reiteration firmly locates Milton's critique as applicable to earthly issues. The cosmic evil of Satan is something re-enacted continually on earth; its manifestations are there in ruling-class practice – in monarchical tyranny, parliamentary fraud, military slaughter. We are shown the giants in battle, and Michael interprets the episode to Adam:

Such were these giants, men of high renown;
For in those days might only shall be admired,

> And valour and heroic virtue called;
> To overcome in battle, and subdue
> Nations, and bring home spoils with infinite
> Manslaughter, shall be held the highest pitch
> Of human glory, and for glory done
> Of triumph, to be styled great conquerors,
> Patrons of mankind, gods, and sons of gods,
> Destroyers rightlier called and plagues of men.
> Thus fame shall be achieved, renown on earth,
> And what most merits fame in silence hid. (XI. 688–99)

The rejection of militarism and military solutions is explicit and unambiguous. Milton's position was consistent on this. In *Paradise Regained* the Son tells Satan:

> They err who count it glorious to subdue
> By conquest far and wide, to overrun
> Large countries, and in field great battles win,
> Great cities by assault: what do these worthies,
> But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave
> Peaceable nations. (III. 71–6)

In the rejection of traditional epic military values, Milton's concerns are both social and literary. There is no separation between the two. In challenging and rewriting literary tradition in its privileging of militarism, he is at the same time challenging prevailing social attitudes and ruling-class assumptions. He is a revolutionary in the literary sphere and in the political sphere, for each involves the other. This can be seen in his prefatory note to *Paradise Lost* on 'The Verse'. It concludes;

> This neglect then of rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming. (p. 457)

The terms are the terms of his political radicalism – the recovery of 'ancient liberty' from 'modern bondage'. Liberty is what humanity began with, and lost, and must now struggle to restore: *Paradise Lost* was written as 'an example' of what had been lost, and what can be done.

Paradise is a model for how things were: a pre-corrupted England, a pre-colonized world. But it is destroyed. The future offered to Adam is 'a paradise within thee, happier far' (XII. 587). These lines have often been interpreted as a mark of Milton's post-Restoration quietism, indeed I have interpreted them that way myself. 'Tyranny must be, / Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse' (XII. 95–6). Is this to imply that political change on earth is not to be sought for, cannot be achieved?

In the short term, perhaps that was the correct reading. Attempts to revive the radical impulse in the 1660s and 1670s were defeated. But if quietism is a total message, for all readers, then why did Milton include his indisputably radical message in the poem? If there is no hope of re-establishing the egalitarian, communal, peaceful society, why go to such pains to present it to us? Just to let us know what is irrevocably lost? Or to keep the spirit of radical opposition alive?

Despite all the mystificatory and obscurantist interpretations, Milton's work has continued to be a text of radical inspiration for over three hundred years. It has continued to carry the word of possibility and resistance through the 'evil days … In darkness, and with dangers compassed round' (VII. 26–8), it has provided a continuum between the generations ensuring that the model of the desirable is not lost. 'Members of Milton's fit audience sit and wait in the darkness, but they read by the candlelight in the meantime,' Sharon Achinstein writes in *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader*. She offers us a persuasive account of Milton's strategy: 'In the nighttime of the earthly kingdom launched in the Restoration, these faithful few, keeping watch, await the true light of day, the true Kingdom of God. For Milton the task ahead was to keep up the faith, either 'Sole, or responsive each to other's note'.'[118]

The period of darkness provides a time for a regrouping of forces and energies, until out of the darkness light will emerge once again.

[118] Sharon Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (Princeton, 1994), 223, 215.

‘Their Sex not Equal Seemed’: Equality and Hierarchy in *Paradise Lost*

… but wide remote
From this Assyrian garden, where the fiend
Saw undelighted all delight, all kind
Of living creatures new to sight and strange:
Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
Godlike erect, with native honour clad
In naked majesty seemed lords of all,
And worthy seemed, for in their looks divine
The image of their glorious maker shone,
Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure,
Severe but in true filial freedom placed;
Whence true authority in men; though both
Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
For contemplation he and valour formed,
For softness she and sweet attractive grace,
He for God only, she for God in him:
His fair large front and eye sublime declared
Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks
Round from his parted forelock manly hung
Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad:
She as a veil down to the slender waist
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved
As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
Subjection, but required with gentle sway,
And by her yielded, by him best received,
Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
And sweet reluctant amorous delay.
Nor those mysterious parts were then concealed,
Then was not guilty shame, dishonest shame

Of nature's works, honour dishonourable,
Sin-bred, how have ye troubled all mankind
With shows instead, mere shows of seeming pure,
And banished from man's life his happiest life,
Simplicity and spotless innocence. (IV. 284–318)[119]

The first description of Adam and Eve is a crucial passage for our understanding of *Paradise Lost.* Not surprisingly it is provocative, confrontational, argumentative and fraught with ambiguity. How could it be otherwise?

Back in 1965 Helen Gardner wrote of the passage

though both
Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
For contemplation he and valour formed,
For softness she and sweet attractive grace,
He for God only, she for God in him ... (IV. 295–9)

'No lines have, I suppose, been more quoted and quoted against Milton than these. But all that is Milton's is the unequivocal firmness and clarity with which he states the orthodox view of his age.' Twenty years earlier, similarly troubled by the passage, Balachandra Rajan had resorted to a similar explanation: 'it typified the deepest and most impersonal feelings of the time.'[120] Yet in so many of his beliefs Milton the revolutionary challenged 'the orthodox view of his age' and 'the deepest and most impersonal feelings of the time.' Is it likely he so passively accepts them here? The male supremacist, anti-egalitarian and absolutist sentiments are proclaimed with an extraordinary brusqueness, yet 'the unequivocal firmness and clarity' ascribed to them by Helen Gardner are upon examination remarkably lacking. The passage is permeated with equivocation and uncertainty in its repetition of 'seemed' and 'seeming':

In naked majesty seemed lords of all,
And worthy seemed (IV. 290–1);

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119 John Carey and Alastair Fowler, ed., *The Poems of John Milton* (London, 1968). All quotations from the poems from this edition.

120 Helen Gardner, *A Reading of Paradise Lost* (Oxford, 1965), 81; B. Rajan, *Paradise Lost and The Seventeenth Century Reader* (London, 1947), 66.

though both

Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed (IV. 295–6);

With shows instead, mere shows of seeming pure. (IV. 316)

At so crucial a passage, why does Milton offer seemed? Why not 'as their sex not equal was', if that was what he meant? Why is the unambiguous avoided?

David Aers and Bob Hodge have noted the 'seemed's but concluded 'these doubts or equivocations are not dominant, and the passage basically supports a male supremacist reading.'[121] Julia M. Walker, examining Milton's use of 'seemed' in relation to free will and predestination in *Paradise Lost* suggests 'Throughout the poem, Milton uses 'seems' in three different ways: first and most simply, 'seems' is used to mean a false appearance, a seeming not an actual reality; second, and more ambiguous, 'seems' is used as 'appears' but without a clear judgment about reality … finally and most confusingly, 'seems' is actually equated with some form of the verb 'to be'.' And she attributes 'their sex not equal seemed' to this hypothetical 'some form of the verb to be.'[122] It is an unconvincing redefinition and it has been challenged.[123] It is hard to see that any of Milton's usages of seems and seemed are free of the sense of 'false appearance'. And the sense of false appearance in this passage is reinforced by Milton's use of 'seeming' in the clearly unambiguous sense of deceit only twenty lines further on: 'With shows instead, mere shows of seeming pure.' (IV. 315)

'Seemed' is a significant word in Milton's vocabulary. A glance at Ingram and Swaim's *Concordance to Milton's English Poetry* will indicate readily enough the uncertainty, ambiguity and pretence regularly embedded in seem, seems and seemed in Milton's usage. At the elevation of Christ in book V of *Paradise Lost*, the event that triggers Satan's resentment and rebellion, we are told 'All seemed well pleased, all seemed, but were not all.' (V. 617) When Satan first approaches the Son to tempt him in *Paradise Regained*, 'seemed' is used as one of the signals of ambiguity and deception:

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121 David Aers and Bob Hodge, '"Rational Burning": Milton on Sex and Marriage', *Milton Studies*, 13 (1979), 23.

122 Julia M. Walker, '"For each seem'd either": Free Will and Predestination in *Paradise Lost*,' *Milton Quarterly*, 20 (1986), 14.

123 See Stephen M. Fallon, 'The Uses of "Seems" and the Spectre of Predestination', *Milton Quarterly*, 21 (1987), 99–101, and Julia M. Walker, 'Free Will, Predestination, and Ghost-Busting,' *Milton Quarterly*, 21 (1987), 101–2.

> But now an aged man in rural weeds,
> Following, as seemed, the quest of some stray ewe,
> Or withered sticks to gather … (I. 314–16)

What seemed the case here was illusion, charade, deception. The passage in book IV of *Paradise Lost* that we are looking at is permeated with ambiguity, not only in relation to the word seemed but in many further aspects. Stevie Davies has remarked on some of the contradictions: 'though Milton's Eve is declared to be naked, she is also seen clothed (with her hair) … though she is supposed to be freely erotic, she practices the art of 'sweet reluctant amorous delay'.[124] Diane Kelsey McColley remarks on other ambiguities about this passage:

> At this point the narrator produces one of those ambiguities which invite the reader to choose a meaning and thereby make him aware of his own opinions. 'Though both Not equal, as thir sex not equal seemd': is the 'as' a conjunction of similitude or of explanation? Are Adam and Eve 'not equal' in all ways or only in regard to sex? Does inequality imply disparity of merit, or only distinction of qualities? Do their bodily forms limit Adam to contemplation and valor and Eve to softness and grace, or are these talents to be shared? If he is for God only, is he not for God in her? These questions can be answered only by watching Adam and Eve unfold in response to experience and to each other.[125]

And Stanley Fish has also noted some of the verbal complexity of the prelapsarian and postlapsarian possible divergent interpretations of crucial words in the passage.[126]

If 'their sex not equal seemed' and if 'seeming' is false, does that mean that their sex *was* equal? The uncertainties of 'seemed' spread elsewhere. To find Adam and Eve described as 'seemed lords of all' makes us wonder, were they really lords of all, and ask what weight does 'lords' carry from a revolutionary who had supported the abolition of the House of Lords. Is 'lords of all' the same as 'lords of the world' (I. 32), or is it a more excessive

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[124] Stevie Davies, *The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature: The Feminine Reclaimed* (Brighton, 1986), 210–11.
[125] Diane Kelsey McColley, *Milton's Eve* (Urbana, 1983), 41.
[126] Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader m Paradise Lost* (London, 1967).

version? Even stranger is the terse proclamation of 'Absolute rule' (V. 301) from an intransigent opponent of absolutism.

This first description of Adam and Eve is problematical, of course, because, as commentators have recurrently pointed out, it is presented through Satan's perceptions:[127]

> this Assyrian garden, where the fiend
> Saw undelighted all delight, all kind
> Of living creatures new to sight and strange:
> Two of far nobler shape … (IV. 285–8)

Marcia Landy's reading is hence questionable when she writes 'we are told by the narrator, lest we misunderstand, that Adam and Eve are 'not equal, as thir sex not equal seem'd.'[128] This is not something told us by the narrator, but something perceived by and mediated through Satan's prejudiced vision. His sight is darkened, 'undelighted' and distortive; it 'seemed' that way to Satan. It would make sense that Adam and Eve 'seemed lords of all' to Satan with his preoccupations about authority, that he should see their relationship as political and inegalitarian, that he should see Adam as absolutist, and that he should offer a political interpretation of the way Eve's hair

> in wanton ringlets waved
> As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
> Subjection. (IV. 306–8)

Again there is ambiguity: the image 'implied', but does not clearly state. This is apt since the image of the vine and elm traditionally represents mutuality, reciprocity and fertility, but not subjection, as Peter Demetz and Todd H. Sammons have scrupulously demonstrated.[129] If subjection is an implication it is a false one – one taken by Satan or the careless fallen reader. It is a suspect political-authoritarian interpretation analogous to the way Adam's 'fair large front and eye sublime declared / Absolute rule.'

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127 Diane Kelsey McColley, *Milton's Eve*, 40; Helen Gardner, *op. cit.*, 81: *et al.*

128 Marcia Landy, '"A Free and Open Encounter": Milton and the Modern Reader' *Milton Studies*, 9 (1976), 17.

129 Peter Demetz, 'The Elm and the Vine: Notes Toward the History of a Marriage Topos', *PMLA*, 73 (1958), 521–32; Todd H. Sammons, '"As the Vine Curls Her Tendrils": Marriage Topos and Erotic Countertopos in *Paradise Lost*', *Milton Quarterly*, 20 (1986), 117–27.

The use of ‘declared’ here carries an ambiguity. Are these lines to be read as if they were the interpretation of an emblem – Adam’s ‘fair large front and eye sublime’ represent absolutism? Or is the ‘declared’ to be interpreted, rather, as Adam ‘expresses’ absolutism – this is what he says, or seems to say, or what his expression of body language ‘declares’: but not necessarily what is the truth of the matter. As Aers and Hodge put it one might wonder whether ‘declared’ (IV. 300) undercuts the whole speech on male rule since these signs may only ‘declare’ absolute rule to the fallen Satan, who does not know what Raphael told Adam, ‘that great / Or bright infers not excellence’. (VIII. 90–1)[130]

If we take the description of Adam and Eve as recording Satan’s interpretative vision, then we can suggest that Satan is projecting a political, hierarchical Hell onto an Eden that is something other. At the beginning of book V we were told

> horror and doubt distract
> His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir
> The hell within him, for within him hell
> He brings, and round about him, nor from hell
> One step no more than from himself can fly
> By change of place. (IV. 18–23)

At the end of his encounter with Adam and Eve, Satan’s soliloquy suggests just such a habit of projection, demonstrated in the opening words in which he literally projects Hell onto Eden: ‘O hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold.’ (IV. 358) And he goes on to relate to Adam and Eve in a political, hierarchical way, offering them ‘league’ and a reception in Hell of ‘all her kings.’ The soliloquy is phrased in emphatically political terms:

> league with you I seek,
> And mutual amity so strait, so close,
> That I with you must dwell, or you with me
> Henceforth … (IV. 375–8)

And he continues

130 Aers and Hodge, *op. cit.* 22. Nonetheless Aers and Hodge see ‘these doubts or equivocations’ as ‘not dominant.’

hell shall unfold,
To entertain you two, her widest gates,
And send forth all her kings … (IV. 381–3)

The political organization of Hell with its kings, and the political thinking and language of Satan with the 'league' he requires, lead on to his political justification for his action:

And should I at your harmless innocence
Melt, as I do, yet public reason just,
Honour and empire with revenge enlarged,
By conquering this new world, compels me now
To do what else though damned I should abhor.
So spake the fiend, and with necessity,
The tyrant's plea, excused his devilish deeds. (IV. 388–94)

Milton spells out explicitly in an unambiguously narrative voice that Satan's thinking is absolutist, tyrannical. Alastair Fowler sees Satan 'here cast in the role of a contemporary Machiavellian politician, excusing the evil means he resorts to by appeals to such values as 'the common weal', 'the good of the state', 'policy' and '*necessity*.''[131] Whenever Milton writes of 'necessity', 'public reason', 'public good' or suchlike phrases, it is with the resonance of political manipulation and tyrannical corruption. Satan's attack on Adam and Eve, then, has its political dimension. Planned politically in the parliament of hell, it is continued in this way by Satan's political language. What we are to note is the huge discrepancy between the political planning, organization and theory of Satan's attack, and the political innocence of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve are simply two people, the only two people, living in domestic harmony. With only the two of them no political organization is needed. That is only introduced after the Fall, as Milton makes clear in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.* There is no coercion or oppression. They exist in a state of simplicity and innocence and this is intruded upon by a political force. The couplet 'When Adam delved and Eve span / Who was then the gentleman?' dates from the English Peasants' Revolt of 1381. It

131 Carey and Fowler, *The Poems of Milton*, 636n.

is the text behind Milton's great epic.[132] The vision of an inegalitarian, hierarchical and absolutist Paradise, then, we can interpret as a Satanic vision.[133] This is what Satan imports from Hell, and this is what he turns Paradise into. The perceived unequal relationships are not ideal but proleptic of the post-lapsarian human condition. The seeming inequality, the seeming lordship, the declared absolutism, the implied subjection – these are all from Hell and all to come on earth. But the true Paradise is to be deduced from the opposite of Satan's vision, the Paradise to come from the negation of the negation.[134]

This reading can be supported both by significant absences and by explicit evidence elsewhere in the poem. The absences first, a couple already remarked by previous commentators. Aers and Hodge ask, ''Absolute rule' for instance: does Adam really have that? To the horror of the orthodox he does not claim it in the crucial exchange with Eve before the Fall.'[135] And Marcia Landy remarks of Milton's treatment of Adam and Eve's postlapsarian quarrels,

> in spite of his psychological insight into the ways in which mental conflict is acted out, he does not see their struggle as arising from the stringent boundaries of hierarchy, with male dominance and female subordination, which make conflict inevitable.[136]

Significantly, then, absolutism and hierarchy are not features of the dramatized dynamic of Adam and Eve's relationship.

We might have expected the alleged hierarchical relationship of Adam and Eve to be spelled out in the authoritative account of creation given by Raphael, but again it is most significantly absent:

> Let us make now man in our image, man

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132 Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1987), 227–8.
133 Dennis Burden's model of 'the Satanic poem' contained within *Paradise Lost* is a useful model here. See Dennis H. Burden, *The Logical Epic: A Study of the Argument of Paradise Lost* (London, 1967), 57ff.
134 Milton's stridently masculinist 'Hee for God only, shee for God in him,' as Mary Nyquist has categorized it, can perhaps now be resituated as *Satan*'s stridently masculinist sentiment. It has worried readers as far back as Richard Bentley, who proposed emending it to 'Hee for God only, shee for God *and* him.' See Mary Nyquist, 'The genesis of gendered subjectivity in the divorce tracts and in *Paradise Lost*, Mary Nyquist and Margaret W. Ferguson, ed., *Re-membering Milton* (New York and London, 1987), 107; *Dr. Bentley's Emendations on the Twelve Books of Milton's Paradise Lost* (London, 1732), 15.
135 Aers and Hodge, *op. cit.* 22.
136 Landy, *op. cit.* 23.

> In our similitude, and let them rule
> Over the fish and fowl of sea and air,
> Beast of the field, and over all the earth,
> And every creeping thing that creeps the ground.
> This said, he formed thee, Adam, thee O man
> Dust of the ground, and in thy nostrils breathed
> The breath of life; in his own image he
> Created thee, in the image of God
> Express, and thou becamest a living soul.
> Male he created thee, but thy consort
> Female for race; then blessed mankind, and said,
> Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth,
> Subdue it, and throughout dominion hold
> Over fish of the sea, and fowl of the air,
> And every living thing that moves on the earth. (VII. 519–34)

Authority over fish, fowl and beasts is spelled out here; but there is no mention of 'lords of all' and no mention of 'rule' or 'dominion' by mankind over mankind, or by one sex over another. Mary Nyquist remarks that the reference to Eve here is 'meagre', as indeed it is.[137] But it is importantly non-discriminatory, unlike the Satanic observations of book IV, and the meagreness, the very absence of comment is in itself significant. As the Diggers declared in *The True Levellers Standard* (1649),

> man had domination given to him, over the beasts, birds and fishes; but not one word was spoken in the beginning, that one branch of mankind should rule over another. And the reason is this. Every single man, male and female, is a perfect creature of himself.[138]

Domination is explicitly limited to 'beasts, birds and fishes' here on the basis of absence in Genesis. Milton perpetuates that significant absence in Raphael's Genesis-based account, and reasserts the interpretation in Adam's comments on Nimrod:

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[137] Nyquist, *op. cit.* 117.
[138] Christopher Hill, ed., *Winstanley: The Law of Freedom and other Writings* (Harmondsworth, 1973), 77.

O execrable son so to aspire
Above his brethren, to himself assuming
Authority usurped, from God not given:
He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl
Dominion absolute; that right we hold
By his donation; but man over men
He made not lord; such title to himself
Reserving, human left from human free. (XII. 64–71)

The model for human society is 'fair equality, fraternal state' (XII. 26) which Nimrod has rejected for 'dominion undeserved / Over his brethren.' (XII. 27–8) How then could Adam's 'fair large front' legitimately declare 'Absolute rule'? Of course, when we turn back to book IV, 'Absolute rule' is not explicitly applied to man ruling over woman: the context seems to imply it, but the expression is ambiguous and evasive. It is an appropriate Satanic suggestion, inexplicit, insinuating. It can always be plausibly denied and interpreted as applying only to 'beast, fish, fowl' – though male supremacism is the prime Satanic implication.

Marcia Landy acknowledged that Adam's assessment of Nimrod 'might seem to argue for egalitarianism. It certainly argues against externally imposed dominion by king or overlord. Yet the equality of fraternity is qualified throughout *Paradise Lost* by the idea of merit.'[139] Certainly there is a hierarchy of merit in *Paradise Lost*, but this is something very different from a fixed hierarchy of birth, rank, caste or class, and in no way conflicts with egalitarianism. The confusion of these different sorts of hierarchy has caused considerable problems in interpreting *Paradise Lost*, especially in those readings that have all too readily accepted the Satanic rigid hierarchy.[140]

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[139] Landy, *op. cit.* 9.

[140] Landy, *op. cit*; William Shullenberger, 'Wrestling with the Angel: *Paradise Lost* and Feminist Criticism', *Milton Quarterly*, 20 (1986), 74, 'The doctrine of woman's subordination is explicit in the text': Virginia R Mollenkott, 'Milton and Women's Liberation', *Milton Quarterly*, 7 (1973), 101, 'Milton treated the subject of female subordination in the most objective fashion possible, not with egotistical gratification but because his view of a hierarchical universe would allow no other concept': Ricki Heller, 'Opposites of Wifehood: Eve and Dalila', *Milton Studies*, 24 (1988), 190. The hierarchical, gender discriminatory model is, of course, endemic in non-feminist readings – e.g., Joseph H. Summers, *The Muse's Method: An Introduction to Paradise Lost* (London, 1962), 95, 'The inequality of man and woman is imaged as clearly as is their perfection. It is not only modern ideas of the equality of the sexes which may make this passage difficult for us; the democratic assumption that ideally every individual *should* be self-sufficient and our tendency to define "perfection" as eternal self-sufficiency complicate our difficulties further.'

The hierarchy of birth, caste, rank or class which rigidly fixes its components and allows little or no change, which is predetermined, is one that institutionalizes privilege, power and inequality. Admiringly defined by C. S. Lewis,[141] it is a system represented by Satan, a model for postlapsarian earthly dynasties, for monarchical, feudal, imperial and class structures.

The hierarchy of moral and spiritual development that Milton has Raphael describe in book V is entirely different. A 'curiously fluid conception of hierarchy', as Barbara Lewalski characterizes it,[142] it is a dynamic model of alchemical circulation and continual refinement.[143]

There is no fixed inequality. It is open to everything to ascend spiritually. This is the divine hierarchy, one of process and ascent, not rule and repression.

> To whom the winged hierarch replied.
> O Adam, one almighty is, from whom
> All things proceed, and up to him return,
> If not depraved from good, created all
> Such to perfection, one first matter all,
> Indued with various forms, various degrees
> Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
> But more refined, more spiritous, and pure,
> As nearer to him placed or nearer tending
> Each in their several active spheres assigned,
> Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
> Proportioned to each kind. So from the root
> Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
> More airy, last the bright consummate flower
> Spirits odorous breathes: flowers and their fruit
> Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed
> To vital spirits aspire, to animal,

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141 C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London, 1942), 72–80.

142 Barbara K. Lewalski, 'Milton on Women – Yet Once More', *Milton Studies*, 6 (1974), 6.

143 On the alchemical, see Alastair Fowler in Carey and Fowler, ed., *Poems of John Milton*, 704n; Michael Lieb, *The Dialectics of Creation: Patterns of Birth and Regeneration in Paradise Lost* (Massachusetts, 1970), 229–44.

To intellectual, give both life and sense,
Fancy and understanding, whence the soul
Reason receives, and reason is her being,
Discursive, or intuitive; discourse
Is oftest yours, the latter most is ours,
Differing but in degree, of kind the same.
Wonder not then, what God for you saw good
If I refuse not, but convert, as you,
To proper substance, time may come when men
With angels may participate, and find
No inconvenient diet, nor too light fare:
And from these corporal nutriments perhaps
Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit,
Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend
Ethereal, as we, or may at choice
Here or in heavenly paradises dwell. (V. 468–500)

As Raphael makes clear, this is a dynamic, evolutionary process. It is a flowing scale of ascent, not a fixed hierarchy. It utterly subverts any fixed political or social or gender roles.[144] Moreover, the unequivocal inapplicability of fixed gender roles is clear when we relate this passage to what we were told in book I about spirits: 'For spirits when they please / Can either sex assume, or both.' (I. 423–4) Since Adam and Eve may 'at last turn all to spirit' and since 'spirits when they please / Can either sex assume, or both', any assertion of gender hierarchy is ultimately unsustainable.

The concepts of sexual inequality and absolute rule are introduced so brusquely and indeed brutally into the portrayal of Paradise that the reader might expect they would be active concepts in the presented relationship of Adam and Eve in the events leading up to the fall. Strikingly this is not so. Nor is equality an issue in Satan's temptation. His strategy is to flatter Eve, to suggest her unique superiority – 'Who shouldst be seen / A goddess among gods, adored and served / By angels numberless' (IX. 546–8), 'no fair to thine / Equivalent or

144 Cf. Marilyn R. Farwell, 'Eve, the Separation Scene, and the Renaissance Idea of Androgyny,' *Milton Studies*, 16 (1982), 13: 'Thus, anyone who at one point represents the natural and material world is not bound to remain at that level. Theoretically then, Eve has the potential to grow into more wisdom and spirituality.'

second' (IX. 608–9). Only after Eve has eaten the apple does she raise the issue of equality, considering whether to share her knowledge with Adam

> and give him to partake
> Full happiness with me, or rather not,
> But keep the odds of knowledge in my power
> Without copartner? So to add what wants
> In female sex, the more to draw his love,
> And render me more equal, and perhaps,
> A thing not undesirable, sometime
> Superior; for inferior who is free? (IX. 818–25)

'She is feeling inferior for the first time,' Dorothy Miller remarks of these lines.[145] Eve only expresses this sense of any inequality when she is fallen. This suggests that inequality is a part of the fallen world, projected by the fallen Satan onto his vision of Paradise, experienced by Eve when she herself has fallen.[146]

And now in the fallen world, confusions abound. Marcia Landy remarks, 'The speech portrays the idea of equality as confused in Eve's mind with dominance. She errs, like Satan, in confusing hierarchy and equality of affection.'[147] But Landy too readily accepts a pejorative account of Eve:

> By violating boundaries and moving to adopt more power through Satan's offers of equality, power, and authority, Eve identified herself as a deviant. In other words, her resistance to subordination is invalidated and stigmatized through its association with the archetypal subverter, Satan. Are we to consider Eve's rebellion and the rebellion of all women against subordination as evil?[148]

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[145] Dorothy Durkee Miller, 'Eve', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 61 (1962), 546.
[146] Oddly, Diane K. McColley puts it the other way: 'Equality in any case is a fallen concept – the legal recourse of a race not much given to rejoicing in the goodness, much less the superiority, of others – needed to rectify injustices that no one in a state of sinless blessedness would consider committing.' Diane K. McColley, 'Milton and the Sexes' in Dennis Danielson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Milton* (Cambridge, 1989), 159.
[147] Landy, *op. cit.* 21.
[148] Landy, *op. cit.* 19. The parallels between Eve and Satan are stressed in Sandra M. Gilbert, 'Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers: Reflections on Milton's Bogey', *PMLA*, 93 (1978), 368–82, and King-Kok Cheung, 'Beauty and the Beast: A Sinuous Reflection of Milton's Eve', *Milton Studies*, 23 (1987), 197–214.

The issue is more tangled than that. Firstly, Eve undoubtedly errs in eating the apple. Secondly, equality is not an issue in her temptation: it is an explanation, a rationalization, that enters afterwards. Indeed, it can only enter later if, as I have suggested, inequality was not the reality of the Paradisal relationship but rather something that 'seemed' the case in Satan's distorted and evil perception.

So although Eve in falling is stigmatized through her association with Satan, this in no way stigmatizes the egalitarian impulse. Once in the fallen, Satanic world the question 'for inferior who is free?' is a valid one. The complicating factor, of course, is that though Satan uses the rhetoric of egalitarianism in rousing supporters for his rebellion, his own motives are unegalitarian. As Joseph Wittreich puts it, 'Satan's strategy is to employ a rhetoric of equality through which he would bring all creation under his subjection.'[149] Satan's handling of the issue of egalitarianism shows all his political and oratorical shiftiness:

> Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend
> The supple knee? Ye will not, if I trust
> To know ye right, or if ye know your selves
> Natives and sons of heaven possessed before
> By none, and if not equal all, yet free,
> Equally free; for orders and degrees
> Jar not with liberty, but well consist.
> Who can in reason then or right assume
> Monarchy over such as live by right
> His equals, if in power and splendour less,
> In freedom equal? (V. 787–97)

Equality is a part – and only a part – of Satan's rhetoric, but never of his social practice. His rhetoric is a serpentine display of confusion and contradiction. Orders and degrees certainly do jar with liberty.[150] That is why those observations of 'their sex not equal seemed', 'Absolute rule' and 'implied subjection' conflict with a true vision of Paradise and alert us

[149] Joseph Wittreich, *Feminist Milton* (Ithaca, 1987), 90–1. And see 'Satan and the Argument from Equality' in John M. Steadman, *Milton's Epic Characters: Image and Idol* (Chapel Hill, n.d.), 160–73.

[150] 'Satan's argument is hampered by the fact that he particularly wants to avoid equality among his own faction, and therefore has to turn aside for a moment to explain (789 *et seq*.) that "Orders and Degrees Jarr not with liberty." He is not very explicit on the subject, *et pour cause.* The passage is one of those where (rightly and inevitably) an element of grim comedy is permitted.' C. S. Lewis, *op. cit.* 76. Virginia R. Mollenkott, however, writes 'It is, for instance, generally true that 'Orders and Degrees jar not with liberty.' *op. cit.* 101.

that there is a Satanic rhetoric intruding. Satan plays hypocritically with a rhetoric of egalitarianism but acts as an absolutist monarch and sets up a patriarchal dynasty with Sin and Death. About this there are no ambiguities. The narrative voice denotes him firmly as 'monarch' (II. 467) and 'tyrant' (IV. 394). It is essential to stress, however, that Satan's use of the language of equality in no way discredits the concept of equality. Indeed, his lack of egalitarian practice serves to confirm egalitarianism as a good: 'fair equality' (XII. 26). To reply at last to Marcia Landy, No, we do not have to consider the rebellion of all women against subordination as evil. But Satan is a bad model. Satan's 'rebellion' was an attempt to establish tyranny, authoritarian rule. Human rebellion for the good is a rebellion against the Satanic authoritarian, an attempt to 'restore us, and regain the blissful seat' (I. 5)[151] by following the way of Christ: a model, indeed that Eve does follow, her 'On me, me only' (X. 832) echoing Christ's speech, 'Behold me then, me for him, life for life / I offer, on me let thine anger fall' (III. 236-7).[152]

Social subordination is a Satanic practice introduced by the fall. But it was not present before the fall, nor does Milton present Eve as rebelling against it, for it is not shown as present. The issues of equality and masculine rule are raised again in the judgement and punishment episode in book X. Again, the passages are fraught with ambiguity. And it is this ambiguity I want to continue to stress. There is certainly a male supremacist, authoritarian, inegalitarian reading prominent in the poem, as numerous critical accounts testify; but at the same time the ambiguities and contradictions and cross-references serve to undermine and deconstruct this reading. They do not do so to the extent of utterly cancelling it; but they certainly qualify and challenge it, demonstrating that there was a tension and a debate, which the poem embodies and expresses.

In the judgment there is a wavering between whether Adam treated Eve as his 'superior, or but equal.' Do we read these as alternatives, or as equally unacceptable parallels in God's view?

> To whom the sovereign presence thus replied.
> Was she thy God, that her thou didst obey
> Before his voice, or was she made thy guide,
> Superior, or but equal, that to her

[151] Wilding, *Dragons Teeth*, 226; Fredric Jameson, 'Religion and Ideology' in Francis Barker *et. al.* ed., *Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century* (Colchester, 1981), 329.
[152] Michael Wilding, *Milton's Paradise Lost* (Sydney, 1969), 106–7.

Thou didst resign thy manhood, and the place
Wherein God set thee above her made of thee,
And for thee, whose perfection far excelled
Hers in all real dignity: adorned
She was indeed, and lovely to attract
Thy love, not thy subjection, and her gifts
Were such as under government well seemed,
Unseemly to bear rule, which was thy part
And person, hadst thou known thy self aright. (X. 144–56)

The floating possibility is that seeing Eve as superior was wrong, as opposed to seeing her as 'but equal.' If Adam had seen her as 'but equal' then his own inner rationality should have allowed him to make a better judgement of what she proposed. Again there is the 'seemed', complicated further by a play on 'unseemly': 'her gifts / Were such as under government well seemed, / Unseemly to bear rule, which was thy part.'

And what might seem a firm resolution of the ambiguity here, that Eve was 'Unseemly to bear rule, which was thy part' dissolves again when we come to Eve's punishment:

to thy husband's will
Thine shall submit, he over thee shall rule. (X. 195–6)

How is this a punishment, if it was already the case before the fall? Nowhere does Milton say the husband's rule over the woman was reiterated.[153] It is not presented as a reassertion, but as a punishment in parallel with 'children thou shalt bring / In sorrow forth' (X. 194–5). And if submission to the husband's will is a punishment for eating the apple, then before the fall such a submission of a man to woman was not the case. In the Paradisal state, we deduce, man and woman lived in equality. But this is an interpretation we have to deduce from a text that often seems to be saying the opposite. The sheer blatancy of the inegalitarian and absolutist ideas expressed in the vision of Adam and Eve in Book IV are what have immediately struck most readers, and inevitably shocked them. But this very blatancy may

[153] Maureen Quilligan, *Milton's Spenser; The Politics of Reading* (Ithaca, 1983), 237 formulates it 'her punishment is not merely to bear children in pain, but to (re)submit to her husband's will.'

well be interpreted as Milton's strategy for shocking the reader into recognition. Stanley Fish's model for reading *Paradise Lost* could be applied here. He writes in *Surprised by Sin*:

> Milton consciously wants to worry his reader, to force him to doubt the correctness of his responses and to bring him to the realization that his inability to read the poem with any confidence in his own perception is its focus.[154]

As Marcia Landy puts it, 'Reading Milton is thus not a passive act, but rather a contentious one.'[155]

Dennis Burden's model of the 'Satanic poem' ever present in *Paradise Lost* is similarly useful as a procedure for understanding what is going on here. He writes in *The Logical Epic*:

> Any particular subject can be made into many different sorts of poem. So if a poem has a thesis it can also have a controversy. This opens up an interesting field to the logically minded poet who, as Milton did, likes a quarrel. A tactic of differentiation was made possible, and the adoption of this in *Paradise Lost* is crucial to the nature of the poem. It quite consciously rejects the wrong sort of system, and this rejected system, with its own ideology and literary theory, plays a radical part in the development of the argument. It is quite explicitly and deliberately written into the poem and belongs to the world of Hell.[156]

This is particularly appropriate if we see the crucial passage of book IV as mediated through Satan's observations, and not narratorial. And Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic model is also applicable. We have here 'the image of another's language and outlook on the world … simultaneously represented and representing' in the way Satan's world view is expressed in Satanic language – the seeming inequality, the seeming lordship, the declared absolutism, the implied subjection. Bakhtin's analysis of the way Pushkin 'represents Onegin's 'language' (a period-bound language associated with a particular world view) as an image that speaks' is relevant to Milton's practice with Satan's language here:

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154 Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, 4.
155 Landy, *op. cit.* 4.
156 Dennis H. Burden, *The Logical Epic*, 57–8.

> the author is far from neutral in his relationship to this image: to a certain extent he even polemicizes with this language, argues with it, agrees with it (although with conditions), interrogates it, eavesdrops on it, but also ridicules it, parodically exaggerates it, and so forth – in other words, the author is in a dialogical relationship with Onegin's language; the author is actually *conversing* with Onegin …[157]

But why is it all so ambiguous? In a legalistic episode of judgement and punishment, we might have expected clarity and scrupulous unambiguity. Yet ambiguity permeates the episode, as it does the whole expression of sexual equality.

The assertion of women's equality was contentious in the seventeenth century as it is today. The moves towards freedom and equality for women had scandalized the ruling classes: Clarendon expresses his horror at women and the lower orders preaching in church.[158] But Milton is not only writing about gender equality. He is writing about something that was much more revolutionary and subversive: equality, human equality. This was a truly subversive doctrine, and its developing expression in the late 1640s had provoked the full repression of the bourgeois revolutionary state. The Levellers, the Diggers and such like were extirpated with a fervor never applied to extirpating royalists.

As Christopher Hill continues to remind us, 'Milton wrote under censorship, and was himself a marked man, lucky not to have been hanged, drawn and quartered in 1660. Two of his books were burnt. So he had to be very careful how he said things he wanted to say.'[159] Assertions of egalitarianism could only be made carefully and obliquely. Like the assertion that Paradise was communist, that there was no private ownership, also in book IV, it can only be inserted glancingly, in passing, amidst other issues:

> Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source
> Of human offspring, sole propriety
> In Paradise of all things common else. (IV. 751–2)

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[157] 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse' in M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin, 1981), 45, 46. Bakhtin's model would place *Paradise Lost* as an example of novelistic, rather than epic, discourse.

[158] Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1704), 32.

[159] Christopher Hill, 'Samson Agonistes Again', *Literature and History* (2nd series), 1 (1990), 24. For a full discussion of the topic see 'Censorship and English Literature' in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, Volume One, Writing and Revolution in Seventeenth-Century England* (Brighton, 1985), 32–71.

The issue of common ownership emerges in a discussion of human sexuality. Similarly, the issues of sexual equality and ‘declared Absolute rule’ and ‘implied / Subjection’ rapidly lead on to ‘sweet reluctant amorous delay’ and ‘those mysterious parts’ (IV. 311–12). Within one contentious issue, human sexuality, Milton involves another contentious issue, egalitarianism and common ownership.

This is not to undercut the issue of gender equality at all. It is not undercut in the poem. But it is firmly attached to that more inclusive and revolutionary aim of achieving total human equality, of restoring us to that still unregained blissful seat, of liberty without orders and degrees, without discrimination, with all things common.

Necessarily Rational

The Logical Epic: A Study of the Argument of Paradise Lost by Dennis H. Burden

Milton's proclamation in *Paradise Lost* that he planned to 'justify the ways of God to men' clearly suggested that God's mysterious ways were open to some attempt at explanation. This was not to imply any criticism of God, but to recognize the limitations of man's understanding. The angels hymn God saying 'Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear.' (III. 380) God's behaviour seems to be dark – both dark and mysterious and dark and cruel – to man and angels because of our imperfect vision, because our minds cannot approach or understand his radiance. As Milton wrote in *Of Reformation in England*, 'the very essence of truth is plainness and brightness; the darkness and crookedness is our own'. What distinguishes Dennis Burden's *The Logical Epic: A Study of the Argument of Paradise Lost* from a conventional theological apologia for *Paradise Lost* is his awareness of the darknesses, the difficulties that Milton was dealing with, and his emphasis that the success of the poem depended on Milton's satisfactorily resolving the problems inherent in his subject. Indeed, a large part of the motive of the poem was the attempt at a resolution of these difficulties, as Burden's study properly reminds us: 'The poem is thus an exercise in clarification, finding system and order in what could, if wrongly taken, appear to be random and inexplicable.' The difficulties were many – in the theme itself, a theme that might seem to show God's behaviour in an unfavorable light, and in the contradictory Biblical sources. Milton had to select from various interpretations, reconcile incoherencies. 'The Bible was Christian history and so was necessarily rational because God was rational – and so any snags or difficulties that the Bible narrative provided had to be smoothed out into reason and system.' *The Logical Epic* is not just another account of the theological conventionality of *Paradise Lost*: it is an invaluable and unique study of the intellectual complexity of the poem, of the planning and structuring of incident, of the brilliant reconciliation of contrary texts, that were necessary before a theological conventionality could be achieved. Burden's concern is less the conclusions Milton reached, than the difficulties he faced before reaching them, the contradictory and damaging interpretations of God's providence he had to guard against and rule out, the thought that lies behind *Paradise Lost.* John Dryden in his *Dedication to Aureng-Zebe* attacked superficial critics and recommended a manner of proceeding:

> The most judicious writer is sometimes mistaken, after all his care; but the hasty critic, who judges on a view, is full as liable to be deceived. Let him first consider all the arguments, which the author had, to write this, or to design the other, before he arraigns him of a fault; and then, perhaps, on second thoughts, he will find his reason oblige him to revoke his censure.

Burden is one of the few critics able to follow Dryden's approach, one of the few critics who is able to see the problems facing the writer – 'to write this, or to design the other' – and to demonstrate the intelligence behind simple incidents and the necessity or wisdom of such an episode, the choices and the traps.

Although *The Logical Epic* does not generally take issue with other critics, its place in the Milton controversy is importantly as a refutation of A. J. A. Waldock's case in *Paradise Lost and its Critics* (Cambridge, 1961). Waldock had claimed 'it is possible, I think, to overrate very much Milton's *awareness* of the peculiar difficulties of his theme'. Burden strenuously denies the charge, and with scrupulous analysis demonstrates the significance of the most minute of details and the way in which they show Milton's 'awareness'. His discussion of the separation of Adam and Eve, for example, is a masterpiece of analysis. Genesis does not say whether Eve was alone when addressed by the serpent, but Burden reminds us 'most of the commentators argued, logically enough, that she was, since the speciousness of the serpent's arguments would have been immediately apparent to Adam'. Moreover,

> if Eve's being found alone is simply her bad luck, then the poem's thesis that God is provident breaks down … So there are important limiting conditions upon Eve's being alone. She must be alone by decision and not accident, and also with Adam's acquiescence. For if Adam does not condone her going, then he will have no involvement whatever in her fall, in which case the divine view that does not differentiate between Adam and Eve (III. 130) would be unjust.

It is Burden's ability to see these difficulties, to see the possible objections to possible ways of handling, that enables him to recognize Milton's 'careful invention' of the gardening argument – to recognize not only what it is, but why it is there and how successful it is. It might be expected that the separation of Adam from Eve would have to be arranged with a

watchful eye for dangers to be avoided and significances to be stressed. Yet Burden points out how *Adam Caduto* and *Adam in Ballingschap* fall into traps that disastrously indict God's providence. It is Milton's distinctiveness in guarding against such dangers in the structuring of his incidents that Burden so importantly stresses.

This logical structuring Burden shows involved in what at first seem the most trivial or insignificant of details. 'The apparently strange episode of Eve's turning away from Adam when she first sees him' Burden demonstrates to be carefully integrated with the logical structure of the poem, and a necessary and far from trivial part of the justification of God's providence.

> What Milton establishes with the episode is that since Adam proceeded to follow her and of his own will claimed her as his wife, and since Eve, when she heard his plea, accepted him as her husband, their marriage was based on consent which was a necessary part of marriage … They did not marry each other merely because there was no one else for either of them to get married to. Even though there was only one man and one woman, there was still freedom and choice in their coming together. God is not compelling them to each other.

Burden goes on interestingly to indicate how important is the presentation of Adam and Eve in a marriage relationship for the argument of *Paradise Lost.* However, the one point where *The Logical Epic* seems to make an unacceptable claim is when Burden extends the implications of this relationship to the conclusion that Adam, rather than choosing to die with Eve, should have divorced her. Certainly Burden is right in seeing the necessity of Milton's argument allowing an alternative action for Adam. But divorce seems alien to the epic decorum and oddly anachronistic: and though it follows through the logic of the marriage relationship and retains Adam's obedience to God's prohibition, it is a solution that offers no place for Adam's love for Eve. A more acceptable alternative (I owe this suggestion to W. W. Robson) would be the possibility of Adam's dying for Eve (so saving her and, by his magnanimity, himself), as Christ died for man; and as Eve later (too late, for it is after they have both fallen) offers to take all the punishment on herself, in words pregnantly echoing the language of Christ's sacrifice.

Milton's concern with the logical ordering of his material to make *Paradise Lost* 'the right Christian poem' is intrinsically related, Burden argues, to his awareness 'of how it could

be made into the wrong unchristian poem'. He argues that Milton in order to 'Justifie the wayes of God to men' allowed into his poem an account of Satan and the Fall that questions, even indicts, God's providence: however, it is an account presented by Satan to the fallen, and phrased in their distinctive terminology: Milton has included this Satanic poem in order to counter – by admitting and then placing – the objections to God's providence: so that his Christian poem can be seen in contrast to be the logical interpretation of events and the true justification. Burden emphasizes the existence of these two accounts throughout *Paradise Lost.* We are first shown the devils singing the Satanic poem in Hell (II. 546ff). It is an attractive poem, and Burden indicates how Milton emphasized its beauty, its pathos, its seductiveness.

> But this poetry is, as Milton makes clear, simply an enchantment, and words such as 'ravishment', 'pleasing sorcery' and 'charm' are used advisedly to send out familiar and important signals. For all its beauty of manner, the matter of what the devils sing and say is unreasonable and misleading. They make the wrong hypotheses about the world with which they are faced, and Milton has most carefully selected the things about which they write. The poets of Hell are preoccupied with what are the two most important literary kinds. They are firstly epic poets, and the thesis of Satanic epic is self-glorification: they 'sing / Their own heroic deeds'. Secondly, they are tragic poets whose heroes find their virtues not free but subject to chance ('hapless fall') and fate ('doom of battle') and who see themselves as grievously trapped in a world of victimization …
>
> In this passage therefore Milton is setting up besides his own poem another poem (or poems) which, if he had been a different sort of poet, he might have written on the same subject.

This Satanic poem runs throughout *Paradise Lost.* Its literary modes and the world view it assumes are given expression by Satan in his soliloquies: 'chance' and 'fate', as Burden demonstrates, become the recurrent terms in which he sees the universe, in opposition to the Christian poem's thesis of God's providence. And Burden finely shows how at crucial stages of the poem the two poems are simultaneously present – as, for instance, at Eve's fall.

> The two poems that the situation could yield are brought excitingly close together. Satan presents himself as a figure of pagan epic-heroic, refusing to be thwarted and victimized. Eve on the other hand, is a figure in a Christian epic – free, and subordinate only to a reasonable law. These two ways of presenting Eve's choice are part of the two theses about the whole episode of her Fall. The wrong thesis would see the forbidden Tree as made provocative and tempting; it would see Eve, compelled by her hunger, trapped at (of all times) the hour of noon, making the heroic attempt to rise above her lot and to become the god. The right thesis is to see the forbidden Tree as totally indifferent; to see Eve as hungry but not bound to eat of that particular Tree; to see Eve's nature as ordained within limits, but ordained providentially for her good and also, as Raphael tells them (V. 493–503), with the possibility of spiritual growth through obedience; to see her here as simply disobedient.
>
> But once Eve has eaten the Fruit, then the poem moves wholly within the Satanic mode.

The two readings are present simultaneously. Burden's case that Milton was fully aware of the difficulties of his theme is irrefutably established here, and the evidence of the two separate poems is brilliantly used to establish this. But a more difficult critical opponent than Waldock is of course William Empson. Burden's position is 'I do not think that Empson is right, but it is only because Milton saw the difficulties of his own thesis that Empson's interpretation seems to me possible.' However, this argument that the 'wrong' case is expressed, but expressed by Satan and so placed as wrong, is always open to the Empsonian rejoinder that it is God's case that is 'wrong', Satan's right. Burden's case is that Satan is wrong both morally and intellectually. Intellectually his error is in believing the universe of *Paradise Lost* subject to chance and fate, whereas it is subject (as we are shown) to God's providence. It is an intellectual error related to and perhaps evidence of his moral error.

However, Burden does not argue any reasons for our believing God's view of the ordering of the universe. God believes he is omnipotent, but it might be that Milton is presenting a Manichaean universe, and that Satan's conception of chance and fate is a fair view of the case. God's belief in his own omnipotence is a deluded one. Satan loses finally by ill luck. Burden does not deal with these possibilities. Certainly they seem unlikely – but an explicit engagement with Empson would have made this a more valuable book. Burden glides over, for instance, that perpetually tricky issue of Satan's escape from Hell. God says

Only begotten Son, seest thou what rage
Transports our adversary, whom no bounds
Prescribed, no bars of hell, nor all the chains
Heaped on him there, nor yet the main abyss
Wide interrupt can hold … (III. 80–4).

The account contradicts that offered in book I (210ff) where Satan's escape is ascribed to 'the will / And high permission of all-ruling heaven'. Burden reconciles the conflict by seeing God's speech as ironical. But this speech – God's first in the poem – is never explicitly said to be ironical, and at the stage that it appears we have not read of any of God's jokes, or of his laughter. Burden does not argue any reasons for taking the speech as ironical, and there is the suspicion that rather than a joke it is a lie. God would have good reasons for lying here – political reasons very similar to Satan's in his speeches to his followers; for he goes on to outline the consequences of Satan's escape – and they are so frightful that for God to admit at this point that he let Satan loose, would seem to implicate him in the evil that Satan perpetrates: it would look as if God contrived the Fall, whereas he is trying in this first speech to argue that he is not responsible for it. Since he has foreknowledge, deliberately to let Satan loose would seem to suggest that he wanted Satan to cause the Fall. To avoid that implication, he suppresses his complicity in Satan's escape, introduces the possibility of Manicheanism, and tries to shift the emphasis from the Fall to the possibility of grace for man which he brings in at the end of his speech. As long as we concentrate on his plan of producing good from evil, there is a chance that we may forget his complicity in the evil: joke or lie, the effect of the passage is the same, to divert attention from what seems to be God's complicity. Evasion rather than logic seems the characteristic of this passage. Are we to assume that Milton was dramatizing God's motives and speech so that we can assess them – in accord with Empson's remark that 'all the characters are on trial in any civilized narrative'?

We need to be sure, of course, whether we are arguing against Burden, Milton, or the Bible myth. Burden is never a simple apologist for Milton, and the strength of his thesis gains from the way in which he is able to show occasions when Milton's logical control falters. He points out, for instance, the difficulties Milton gets into in trying to reconcile the confusion in Genesis between God's command not to eat the fruit, and Eve's statement that God said it

was neither to be eaten nor even touched. But the Bible myth could offer far greater difficulties than that to the logical mind. Mark Twain's *Extracts From Adam's Diary* (1893) notes some of Eve's prelapsarian worries:

> She is in much trouble about the buzzard; says grass does not agree with it; is afraid she can't raise it; thinks it was intended to live on decayed flesh. The buzzard must get along the best it can with what is provided. We cannot overturn the whole scheme to accommodate the buzzard.

Eve had seen one of the logical problems of the Paradisal state: Milton can avoid this one because Genesis does not draw attention to it. But the problem of the serpent is unavoidable. Genesis committed Milton to making it subtle, and so Milton presents it:

> close the serpent sly
> Insinuating, wove with Gordian twine
> His braided train, and of his fatal guile
> Gave proof unheeded. (IV. 347–50)

Burden comments 'Milton is quite aware of the danger he is running of making God seem improvident in thus creating slyness in one of his creatures. He saves his thesis by making that slyness quite visible and apparent (even if, through Man's fault, it went unheeded).' Certainly as Burden valuably indicates later, the Uriel incident dramatizes that angels as well as man may be misled by hypocritical disguise – man is not the only victim. But neither by that nor by making the serpent's slyness evident, is God's providence wholly cleared. Indeed, by emphasizing how evident the slyness is, Milton describes it as 'fatal guile' – but this serves only to make us question how God could have put a creature not only 'sly' but with 'fatal guile' into the garden; and should an innocent Adam or Eve recognize 'fatal guile' in God's creation? Moreover, it is a phrase not readily reconciled with Raphael's description to Adam of the serpents as 'to thee / Not noxious' – unless Raphael is being deliberately misleading.

Some of the reconciliations Milton achieves are less the result of logic than, in Burden's own phrase, of sleight of hand. Adam's fall was particularly difficult to deal with. St. Paul had written 'And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in

transgression.' Moreover, as Burden says, 'the logic of the case anyway insisted that Adam could not be deceived since that would argue that God had given him insufficient wisdom for his situation, and hence God was not provident … That is why the real awkwardness in Milton's account is earlier in the book, where Adam, letting Eve depart to garden alone, is more deceived than he should have been. But it was better to have Adam deceived there – where a set of very persuasive arguments could be provided – than here where it would be obviously disastrous, slighting to God and contrary to St. Paul.' Milton does not achieve any logical resolution here, merely shifts the problem to a less conspicuous position. It is sleight of hand – but perhaps sleight of hand is the best available solution for such a problem.

One of the virtues of *The Logical Epic* is that it provokes disagreement – its particular accounts of the successful or necessary handling of an incident may not always gain our assent. But this is no criticism of the study: it is a mark of its success in encouraging us to read *Paradise Lost* in this close argumentative way, in drawing attention to these cruxes in Milton's material, and his ways of handling them. And our disagreements are not likely to be many – not anyway over the handling of the argument. Burden has finely demonstrated that the poem's argument – in theme, in exposition, and in structuring and disposition of incident – is as tautly controlled as Christopher Ricks's *Milton's Grand Style* (Oxford, 1963) demonstrated the language to be. We shall never again be misled into thinking that Milton simply and easily took over a ready-made story whose incidents and meanings were already determined. Our nagging doubts are likely to be not about the handling of the argument, but about the ideas that are handled. It is unlikely that *The Logical Epic* could ever be reconciled with *Milton's God;* but at the present they stand beside each other in odd balance – awaiting the hand to offer the synthesis, or hang forth the golden scales.

Milton's *Samson Agonistes*: A Political Reading

Samson Agonistes is the only play that Milton wrote. At the beginning of his career he wrote two masques, *Arcades* and *A Masque presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634* (*Comus*), but nothing else for the stage. Indeed he makes a point of telling us in the opening note 'Of that sort of dramatic poem called tragedy' that *Samson Agonistes* 'never was intended' for the stage.[160] During the years of the English Revolution, 1640–59, the theatres had all been closed by official order. Milton, as the foremost propaganda writer for the revolutionary government, might be expected to have agreed with its hostility to the public theatre, something seen as a corrupt institution, identified with royalists, prostitutes and such like. So it is not surprising that *Samson Agonistes* 'never was intended' for the stage; nor is it surprising that the model Milton followed was not that of English Shakespearean theatre, but the archaic model of classical Greece. This was a model rarely seen performed, except in occasional university productions. Most people's experience of it would have been a reading experience. It is a 'dramatic poem.' And to stress Milton's conscious rejection of theatre, we should notice that the building which Samson demolishes when he pulls down the columns supporting the roof is called a 'house' in the Hebrew, in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint), in the Vulgate and in the Authorized Version (the 'King James' Bible). Milton, however, writes that 'The building was a spacious theatre' (1605). His implication is surely that theatres are places of barbaric, pagan performance and it is appropriate that they should be pulled down. This is the supreme gesture of anti-theatre.[161]

So why did Milton write a 'dramatic poem'? It may be that he wanted to fulfill the range of major classical and renaissance literary forms, having already written elegies, sonnets, pastoral, epic and formal speeches. But there are many forms that he did not choose – satire, comedy, the erotic fable, prose narrative.

The distinguishing feature of drama is its potential for multiple points of view. Different positions, different value systems, can be expressed by different characters, and

[160] John Carey and Alastair Fowler, ed., *The Poems of John Milton* (London, 1968). All quotations from the poems from this edition.

[161] David Loewenstein quotes William Prynne's interpretation of Samson's fate as 'God's vengeance not onely on their Actors and Spectators … but likewise on those States and Cities which allow them,' and he goes on to explore 'the complex sense of theatricality' in *Samson Agonistes.* David Loewenstein, *Milton and the Drama of History: Historical Vision, Iconoclasm and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, 1990), 136–40.

there is no single, identifiable authorial voice that resolves their conflict.[162] Drama allows for the possibilities of different interpretations while evading authorial identification with any individual position. And so Samson can be seen as heroic, or as deluded, as self-pitying and paranoid, or as patient and confident of his divine role. A dramatic presentation allows this debate, this argument about Samson's part. The focus is on ambiguity, on questioning. But this does not mean that the reader is not expected to provide an unambiguous answer.

In this *Samson Agonistes* is in marked contrast with *Paradise Regained*, the poem with which it was published in 1671. *Paradise Regained* is a brief epic and the Son of God is indisputably the hero. He is tested by Satan and there is some debate and argument about what 'Son of God' means. But there is no doubt that he is divinely authorized, and there is no doubt that he is in the role of epic hero. He is redefining heroism, certainly: he is not a military warrior but a man of peace. But there is no ambiguity about his role as an appropriate hero.

With Samson, however, instead of epic certainty there is dramatic questioning. Everything is ambiguity and questioning. As John Carey noted in the introductory remarks to his edition, *Samson Agonistes* 'is full of questions: all the characters ask them, so does the chorus.'[163] Samson's first speech asks

> Why was my breeding ordered and prescribed
> As of a person separate to God,
> Designed for great exploits; if I must die
> Betrayed, captived, and both my eyes put out,
> Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze …? (30–4)

And even though he corrects himself for questioning God's plan, 'divine prediction' (44), it is with a further question that he makes the correction:

> Yet stay; let me not rashly call in doubt
> Divine prediction; what if all foretold
> Had been fulfilled but through mine own default …? (44–61)

[162] There is 'no narrator … with authority to interpret the drama for the reader.' Anne Davidson Ferry, *Milton and the Miltonic Dryden* (Cambridge Mass, 1968), 128.
[163] *The Poems of John Milton*, edited by John Carey and Alastair Fowler, 337.

What if the prophecies fail to become true because of his own failures?

We are presented with the former heroic warrior, now blind and imprisoned. The Chorus asks its own question:

> Can this be he,
> That heroic, that renowned,
> Irresistible Samson? (124–6)

The Chorus is asking how did this happen, and was Samson perhaps not so marvellous after all? Samson himself goes on to ask

> tell me friends,
> Am I not sung and proverbed for a fool
> In every street …? (202–4)

The Chorus rebukes him, as Samson has already rebuked himself, for questioning God's plan.

> Tax not divine disposal, wisest men
> Have erred, and by bad women been deceived;
> And shall again, pretend they ne'er so wise. (210–12)

But then the Chorus goes on to question Samson's own behaviour:

> Yet, truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder
> Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather
> Than of thine own tribe fairer, or as fair,
> At least of thy own nation, and as noble. (215–18)

Samson's answer is

> they knew not
> That what I motioned was of God; I knew
> From intimate impulse, and therefore urged

The marriage on; that by occasion hence
I might begin Israel's deliverance. (221–5)

But this is the crux of the problem. Was Samson's decision to marry his first and second wife indeed 'motioned … of God'? How can anybody but Samson know? Indeed, does he know, or is he simply rationalizing his own impulses? Is he inspired, or is he deluded? As the Chorus sardonically replies 'Yet Israel still serves with all his sons.' (240) For all Samson's sense of his destiny to deliver Israel from domination by the Philistines, he has not yet achieved anything.[164] Is his sense of his chosen destiny a true sense, or is he simply deluded, or so involved in self-justification as to imagine that there is something special about himself?

This pervasive uncertainty about Samson's motivation, about whether or not he was divinely inspired, relates not only to what occurred before the events of the drama, but to Samson's culminating decision and the consequent off-stage action. After having been confronted and provoked by Harapha, Samson initially refuses to appear as a public spectacle at the feast of Dagon. Then, before the second request to attend is delivered, Samson announces

I begin to feel
Some rousing motions in me which dispose
To something extraordinary my thoughts.
I with this messenger will go along,
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour
Our Law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.
If there be aught of presage in the mind,
This day will be remarkable in my life
By some great act, or of my days the last. (1381–9)

But is this sense of 'something extraordinary' divine inspiration or delusion? There is no way for us, the readers, or for the other characters to tell. When Samson says 'if there be aught of

[164] Mary Ann Radzinowicz remarks 'Israel's continued servitude cannot be held to disprove the validity of inner light; as Samson was free to attend to the impulse to offer deliverance, so Israel was free to cooperate or not in the difficult task of realizing it.' *Toward* Samson Agonistes: *The Growth of Milton's Mind* (Princeton, 1978), 30. My stress here, however, is that Milton presents Samson's belief in having received the inner light as open to question, and has it explicitly questioned by the Chorus in this response.

presage in the mind' it remains as ambiguous as ever. For Samson has done things that had he been able to foretell their consequences, he surely would not have done – like revealing the secret of his strength to Dalilah. The mind may be capable of presage, but is Samson capable of correctly recognizing and interpreting what is foretold? The evidence suggest not. And what he foretells here is expressed with a strange ambiguity. 'This day will be remarkable in my life / By some great act, or of my days the last' (1388–9). The day indeed turns out to be remarkable in the 'great act' of killing all the Philistine lords, but it is also for Samson 'of my days the last' since he kills himself at the same time. Anthony Low interprets this passage as irony: 'it is more true than Samson realizes: this will be both the last and the greatest day of his life.' Ironically or not, Samson has once again failed to see the future clearly. And if he has failed to get this message right, does that mean that he has also failed to get other aspects of the message right, and that his decision to go to the theatre was not divinely inspired?

There is another way of looking at Samson's words that might support this interpretation. Samson has expressed his prediction as an alternative – 'some great act, or of my days the last.' What if we interpret this alternative as meaning that though this was his last day, it was not a 'great act'? It was a large-scale destructive act, but not great in the sense of good, or heroic, or divinely inspired? A theatrical act rather than an act of God. Mary Ann Radzinowicz takes the 'rousing motions' as firm evidence of 'divine impulsion;' but Joseph Wittreich interprets Samson's final words in the theatre with the key phrase 'of my own accord' as evidence that his final act was not divinely inspired.[165]

> Now of my own accord such other trial
> I mean to show you of my strength, yet greater;
> As with amaze shall strike all who behold. (1643–5)

The polarized critical responses – and such polarized responses could be multiplied from other commentators – are irreconcilable; unless we argue that both have their truth, and that a total response is one that would recognize the ambiguity of the issue.

If we turn to 'the argument', the prose summary of the action at the beginning of the dramatic poem, the ambiguity is not resolved but remains as puzzling as ever. Required to attend the feast, Samson 'at first refuses, dismissing the public officer with absolute denial to

[165] Anthony Low, *The Blaze of Noon: A Reading of* Samson Agonistes (New York and London, 1974), 81; Radzinowicz, 345, 349; Joseph Wittreich, *Interpreting* Samson Agonistes (Princeton, 1986), 355.

come; at length persuaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatenings to fetch him' (p. 346, ll. 71–4).

Samson is 'persuaded inwardly that this was from God,' but was it? The phrase 'persuaded inwardly' avoids making it clear whether this was a true persuasion, or a personal delusion. The ambiguities are scrupulously maintained.[166]

Samson Agonistes was published in 1671, eleven years after the collapse of the English republic and the reinstitution of the monarchy. Milton had been one of the foremost propaganda writers for the republic, and was writing political tracts in its defence until the very end – his *Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* was published in March 1660. After the restoration there was some chance he might have been brought to trial or assassinated. He spent time in hiding and parliament requested the king to order the burning of his *Eikonoklastes* and *Defence of the People of England*.[167] In part his blindness saved him: the royalists interpreted it as evidence that God had already punished him. When *Samson Agonistes* appeared it would inevitably have been read in the context of Milton's political past. As William Empson put it, 'the poem was calculated to strike the first readers as about Milton himself, and *a fortiori* about current politics; and it drives home its political point very firmly.'[168] Anything written by this prominent revolutionary would be read to discover what he believed now: the censors would have read it to make sure he was not reasserting radical republicanism.[169] The former revolutionaries who had not changed their beliefs would have read it in the hope he was saying something about politics. Because of the tight censorship controls Milton was not able to write anything explicit. It all had to be done

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[166] I first discussed these issues in 'Regaining the Radical Milton' in *The Radical Reader*, ed. Stephen Knight and Michael Wilding (Sydney, 1977), 130–41, reprinted in Wilding, *Dragons Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1987), 249–57. Joseph Wittreich likewise stresses that 'Milton does not allow us to accept this mass slaughter unquestioningly,' that it remains unknown whether 'Samson really act[s] by divine commission? how does he, how do we, know?' and that 'Samson's failure is that, by employing force, he perpetuates the very patterns of history that he would reverse.' (79, 139, 284.)

[167] William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography* (1968), 2nd edition revised by Gordon Campbell (Oxford, 1996), 1: 570, 2: 1084, n. 19.

[168] William Empson, *Milton's God* (1961), revised and amplified edition (Cambridge, 1981), 217. Other readings taking into account Milton's own political situation include Frank Kermode, 'Milton in Old Age,' *Southern Review*, 11 (1975), 513–29; Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, 446; and Wittreich, *Interpreting* Samson Agonistes, xxi: 'Any poem about Samson written or published during the years of the Civil War, or in its aftermath, would predictably involve some reflection on a revolution that had found its identity in, and drawn much of its spirit from, the Samson story. A poem about Samson *written by John Milton* would, just as predictably, involve reflections upon a revolution which Milton had championed and self-reflection by virtue of the fact that Milton himself had been given an identity with Samson and certainly preserves a measure of that identity in his poem.'

[169] On censorship see Christopher Hill, 'Censorship and English Literature' in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, Volume One, Writing and Revolution in Seventeenth-Century England* (Brighton, 1985), 32–71; Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison,1984).

in a hidden way, it all had to be interpreted. But that political context, that political expectation was inevitably there. Did he still believe in the Good Old Cause, or had he seen the error (in Royalist terms) of his ways? Was he writing a reassessment of his political beliefs, a reconsideration of those twenty years of commitment? Or was he reasserting the same beliefs? Or was he reasserting the same beliefs but at the same time reconsidering the past to explain what went wrong?

And of course to have the main character of *Samson Agonistes* a blind man inevitably encouraged the expectation of identification with the poet. When he wrote those moving words about Samson's blindness, surely Milton was writing about his own situation.

> O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
> Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
> Without all hope of day!
> O first-created beam, and thou great word,
> Let there be light, and light was over all;
> Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree?
> The sun to me is dark
> And silent as the moon,
> When she deserts the night
> Hid in her vacant interlunar cave. (80–9)

Samson's laments about his blindness are some of the most deeply moving passages of English poetry. Equally powerful are his laments about the degradation and humiliation he now suffers:

> Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
> Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves … (40–1)

Particularly painful is his sense that his suffering is his own fault.

> Whom have I to complain of but myself?
> Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
> In what part lodged, how easily bereft me,

Under the seal of silence could not keep,
But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
O'ercome with importunity and tears.
O impotence of mind, in body strong!
But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom …? (46–54)

Samson recognizes his error here in having revealed the secret of his strength. But that is all that he recognizes as error. At no point does he consider his belief that he was 'designed for great exploits' (32) was mistaken. His sense of being chosen by God remains unchanged. He may speculate that because of his mistakes God will no longer use him, that the prophecies will now not be fulfilled:

what if all foretold
Had been fulfilled but through mine own default …? (44–5)

He may complain that God did not make him intelligent enough:

Immeasurable strength they might behold
In me, of wisdom nothing more than mean;
This with the other should, at least, have paired,
These two proportioned ill drove me transverse. (206–9)

But he at no point doubts his inner conviction that he was destined to be an instrument of God.

If we are to find a political interpretation of *Samson Agonistes*, if we are to discover a reading that relates the dramatic poem to Milton's own political beliefs, then this unwavering certainty of Samson's – amidst all the ambiguity of critical interpretation of his final act – is its basis. Milton's own suffering in his blindness, his sense of being effectively imprisoned in the Restoration society, is given expression in Samson's moving laments. Significantly, what is never lamented is that initial commitment to God's purpose. Samson regrets his mistakes, his marriages, the way things turned out, but he never questions his commitment to the project of freeing his people from bondage. This is Milton's answer to those who would seek

a reading of the poem relating to his personal situation and political beliefs: his commitment remains unchanged, unlamented, unambiguous. And unchanged is his belief that his political position, his revolutionary commitment, was in accord with the divine will.

The regrets are all for the way things have turned out. And these regrets dominate the opening of the poem. Time and again it is asked why did everything go wrong? Samson is tormented by his 'restless thoughts' (19) that 'present / Times past, what once I was, and what am now (21–2). The contrast between the good times and the present times is constantly reasserted. The Chorus remarks 'O change beyond report, thought, or belief!' (117). Sometimes it is expressed in that traditional wheel of fortune way, how are the mighty fallen: the Chorus declaims

> By how much from the top of wondrous glory,
> Strongest of mortal men,
> To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fallen. (167–9)

Manoah, Samson's father, remarks likewise on the 'miserable change' (340): 'Nay what thing good / Prayed for, but often proves our woe, our bane?' (350–1). This insistent questioning of why everything has turned out badly is focused specifically on Samson's personal situation. But since Samson sees himself primarily as someone with a public role, as a potential liberator of his people, it is an obvious step of interpretation to see these remarks on the sorry change of things as relating to Milton's attitude to the Restoration. But it would have been impossible to write explicitly about the 'betrayal of the revolution' in the 1660s or 1670s. The focus in the dramatic poem remains carefully on Samson the individual, not on any wider explicit lament about social change. But Samson in bondage is an emblem of his people in bondage to the Philistines. What has happened to Samson is an image of what has happened to them. Samson's fate is representative – 'Samson's tragedy is the tragedy of Israel' as Wittreich remarks[170]and Radzinowicz similarly observes, 'On the political level, Milton uses the figure of Samson to show the way in which an individual may represent a nation and thereby encapsulate a nation's political existence.'[171] In this regard the laments about tragic change, about decline and fall, are readily interpretable as laments about the fate of the chosen people: and that readily transfers to a lament about the English people who, during the

[170] Wittreich, 96.
[171] Radzinowicz, 113.

revolutionary years, were consistently presented in radical propaganda as the new chosen people of God, leading forward the completion of the Protestant reformation of the church and state.

Continually the characters stress that God and the divine plan are not to be blamed. The Chorus says ‘Tax not divine disposal.’ (210). Samson says

> Appoint not heavenly disposition, father,
> Nothing of all these evils hath befall’n me
> But justly … (373–5)

If God is not to be blamed, who is? Samson readily admits some, at least, of his own errors. But he also points to the political failings of the ruling class. The Chorus says

> In seeking just occasion to provoke
> The Philistine, thy country’s enemy,
> Thou never wast remiss, I bear thee witness:
> Yet Israel still serves with all his sons. (237–40)

Samson replies

> That fault I take not on me, but transfer
> On Israel’s governors, and heads of tribes,
> Who seeing those great acts which God had done
> Singly by me against their conquerors
> Acknowledged not, or not at all considered
> Deliverance offered … (241–6)

Mary Ann Radzinowicz comments on this speech that ‘Milton expressed through the defeated, tormented words of Samson his bitterest disappointment in his own countrymen.’ This is true. But it is not simply his – either Samson’s or Milton’s – own countrymen in general who are indicted here, it is more specifically the ruling class, the ‘governors, and

heads of tribes.'[172] The rulers failed to take advantage of Samson's guerilla war activities. Instead, they handed him over to their enemies in order to protect their own property – 'to prevent / The harass of their land …' (256–7). Even at this point, Samson stresses, if some of them had joined with him, the Philistines could have been defeated. Samson was handed over

> Bound with two cords; but cords to me were threads
> Touched with the flame: on their whole host I flew
> Unarmed, and with a trivial weapon felled
> Their choicest youth; they only lived who fled.
> Had Judah that day joined, or one whole tribe,
> They had by this possessed the towers of Gath,
> And lorded over them whom now they serve;
> But what more oft in nations grown corrupt,
> And by their vices brought to servitude,
> Than to love bondage more than liberty,
> Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty;
> And to despise, or envy, or suspect
> Whom God hath of his special favour raised
> As their deliverer; if he aught begin,
> How frequent to desert him, and at last
> To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds? (261–76)

This is a piece of past history that Samson tells. It is crucial to a political reading of the drama. It relates directly to Milton's view of the English people – that they had been corrupted by the policies of Charles I before the revolution, that they had grown to love their bondage because that was easier than fighting for liberty. Later we are told of some of the specific social corruptions of the Philistine lords when Manoah approaches them about ransoming Samson.

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[172] A consistent class analysis runs through Milton's presentation of the situation. Empson remarks of Samson's comments to Delilah that the Philistines who recruited her against him are 'No more thy country, but an impious crew / Of men conspiring to uphold their state' (888–95) that 'the language suggests that the Philistine lords have practically become a wicked political party or ruling class.' *Milton's God*, 214. For issues of class in *Samson Agonistes* see Thomas N. Corns, 'Milton and Class', in *Running Wild: Essays, Fictions and Memoirs Presented to Michael Wilding*, ed. David Brooks and Brian Kiernan (Sydney and New Delhi, 2004), 55ff.

Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;
That part most reverenced Dagon and his priests,
Others more moderate seeming, but their aim
Private reward, for which both god and state
They easily would set to sale, a third
More generous far and civil, who confessed
They had enough revenged, having reduced
Their foe to misery beneath their fears,
The rest was magnanimity to remit
If some convenient ransom were proposed. (1461–71)

It is not a totally corrupt public world that is presented. A third are reasonable, a third are ideological hard liners, and a third are corrupt and would sell 'both god and state.' This is the Philistine society, but we can readily deduce a parallel with English society.

Greed is one motivation. Samson himself as a prisoner is hired out by his owners 'which earns my keeping / With no small profit daily to my owners' (1260–1). It is a small detail, but the stress on cash and profit serves to connect the Old Testament world with the motivations of seventeenth-century England. And when Samson denounces the Philistines to Dalila his indictment suggests a parallel with the view of Restoration England that a former revolutionary might well hold:

No more thy country, but an impious crew
Of men conspiring to uphold their state
By worse than hostile deeds, violating the ends
For which our country is a name so dear;
Not therefore to be obeyed. (891–5)

The Danites and Philistines may differ in religious commitments, but their ruling classes are presented as equally corrupt.

The slaughter of the Philistines in the theatre, Samson's last great act, is something presented off-stage and reported to us. The striking dramatized conflict is the confrontation of

Dalila and Samson. It is a very bitter exchange and those writers who want to argue that Milton was a male chauvinist and misogynist have seized on it.

> Out, out hyaena; these are thy wonted arts,
> And arts of every woman false like thee,
> To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray … (748–50)

These words are Samson's, but as with everything of Samson's they are open to the possibility that he has got things wrong. He is not a mouthpiece of truth but someone whose utterances have to be assessed. Even more virulent are the words of the Chorus on woman's love.

> Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best
> Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil,
> Soft, modest, meek, demure,
> Once joined, the contrary she proves, a thorn
> Intestine, far within defensive arms
> A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue
> Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms
> Draws him awry enslaved
> With dotage, and his sense depraved
> To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends. (1034–43)

But the Chorus is not the embodiment of truth; the Chorus is not an objective summing up of actions and opinion. It is, as the list of 'The Persons' at the beginning of the drama makes clear, a 'Chorus of Danites.' The Chorus consists of member of Samson's own tribe of Dan, 'certain friends and equals of his tribe, which make the Chorus' it is spelled out in 'The Argument' (p. 346; ll. 61–2). So anything that the Chorus says is partial, one-sided, in this dispute. As Empson puts its, 'the Chorus are Israelite patriots.'[173] The Danites of the Chorus

[173] Empson, *Milton's God*, 222. The Danites, who comprise the Chorus, and their values, are certainly open to question. 'In the Book of Judges, the account of Samson is immediately followed by another story about the Danites in which, after appearing in a most contemptible light as idolaters, thieves, and murderers, they vanish from history. In Jacob's prophecy of the twelve tribes at the end of Genesis, Dan is described as a treacherous "serpent in the way," and in the list of twelve tribes in the Book of Revelation the name of Dan is omitted. For

are the enemy of Dalila and her people, the Philistines. We need to assess what they say, not simply accept it. And their final summing up on women certainly needs assessment.

> Therefore God's universal law
> Gave to the man despotic power
> Over his female in due awe,
> Nor from that right to part an hour,
> Smile she or lour:
> So shall he least confusion draw
> On his whole life, not swayed
> By female usurpation, nor dismayed. (1053–60)

Milton's entire political writing was against 'despotic power.' Despotism, tyranny, was what he always, consistently opposed. It is inconceivable that he would have endorsed the exercise of 'despotic power' in any context. It is a deliberately excessive statement. It expresses the value system of the Old Testament tribe of Dan, to which Samson belongs, and indicates some of the problems of Samson.

Samson is an Old Testament hero, a man of brute violence. His final 'great act' is a massacre of horrific dimensions.[174] As soon as the Messenger has described the slaughter, the Chorus responds ecstatically:

> O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!
> Living or dying thou hast fulfilled
> The work for which thou wast foretold
> To Israel, and now li'st victorious
> Among thy slain self-killed
> Not willingly, but tangled in the fold,
> Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoined
> Thee with they slaughtered foes in number more
> Than all thy life had slain before. (1660–8)

Milton this would practically mean being erased from the book of life.' Northrop Frye, *Spiritu Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth and Society* (1976) (Bloomington, 1983), 222.

[174] David Loewenstein, however, argues that 'Milton is dramatizing in Samson's terrifying act a poetics of regenerative iconoclasm.' (147)

That line ‘than all thy life had slain before’ is a chilling way to sum up a career, a ‘life’ measured in terms of those it has ‘slain’. And the language of the Chorus here – ‘dearly bought revenge, yet glorious’ and ‘dire necessity’ – is the language with which Satan is identified in *Paradise Lost*, where it is in marked contrast to the language of the Son of God.[175] In Christian terms revenge is not glorious but barbaric – Christ’s message was to turn the other cheek, not seek revenge. And ‘necessity’ was the world view of the pagan world, of classical Greece – inevitability, fate. The Christian view was a world of ‘providence’, of divine aid. The contrast of these two world views is especially marked in the collocation of *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regained* in the same volume at their first publication.[176]

Samson’s values are of the primitive, revenge oriented, violent heroic world, a pre-Christian world. His father, Manoah, concludes

> Samson hath quit himself
> Like Samson, and heroicly hath finished
> A life heroic, on his enemies
> Fully revenged, hath left them years of mourning … (1709–12)

It is a limited, primitive world view. It is the world of the Old Testament, before Christ’s new dispensation. The ambiguity as to whether Samson was divinely inspired or not can be explained in this context. Perhaps inspiration in the Old Testament did lead to mass slaughter; there are enough barbarous episodes to suggest so. Perhaps that was the best that could be done at that historic stage of world development, before Christ’s coming. Milton can afford to leave the issue ambiguous; it may have been strategic to leave it so. What he is unambiguous about is that such military values are superseded by the new dispensation. As the narrator of *Paradise Lost* makes clear, the old brutal, military heroic ethic is replaced by Christianity’s ‘better fortitude / Of patience and heroic martyrdom’ (IX. 31–2).[177] Similarly, the message of

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[175] See Dennis H. Burden, *The Logical Epic* (London, 1967), 65, and John Carey and Alastair Fowler ed., *The Poems of John Milton*, 636n.

[176] I explored the parallelism of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* and its political implications in ‘Regaining the Radical Milton’ in *The Radical Reader*, 130–41, reprinted in *Dragons Teeth*, 249–57. The issue is further examined by Joseph Wittreich, *Interpreting Samson Agonistes*, 329–85.

[177] G. A. Wilkes, citing lines 1268–91, has pointed out that ‘the chorus at the end presents two different roles that a deliverer may play. First is the role of force (in which Samson has hitherto cast himself) … and then the contrasting role of patience, the lot of the martyr.’ ‘The Interpretation of *Samson Agonistes*’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 26 (1963), 175.

Paradise Regained, published in the same volume as *Samson Agonistes*, is that the revolution must be internal. Imposing a new social order by violent means is not the answer.[178]

It may, of course, be objected that the revolution to which Milton had committed himself was brought about by military means. Jackie Di Salvo has usefully explored the concept of 'divinely inspired military vocation' in Samson and the New Model Army.[179] But by 1660 that revolution had failed. And any analysis of the causes of the failure would have to consider whether military means had been the appropriate ones to effect a change in social consciousness. It is my argument that Milton's view was that the military solution had been a bad idea.[180]

If we turn back to the confrontation with Dalila we can see a comparable limitedness of perception in Samson's attitude to her. For what he cannot forgive in Dalila is the way she acted from the same political and nationalist convictions as his; the same, that is, in principle, the difference being that she was on the other side. As Dalila tells Samson

> thou know'st the magistrates
> And princes of my country came in person,
> Solicited, commanded, threatened, urged,
> Adjured by all the bonds of civil duty
> And of religion, pressed how just it was,
> How honourable, how glorious to entrap
> A common enemy, who had destroyed
> Such numbers of our nation: and the priest
> Was not behind, but ever at my ear,
> Preaching how meritorious with the gods
> It would be to ensnare an irreligious
> Dishonourer of Dagon: what had I
> To oppose against such powerful arguments? (850–62)

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178 I discuss the message of *Paradise Regained* in 'Something Better: Reflections on Fundamentalism, Revolution, Loss of Faith and the Future,' *infra*.

179 Jackie Di Salvo, '"The Lord's Battells": *Samson Agonistes* and the Puritan Revolution,' in James D. Simmonds, ed., *Milton Studies*, 4 (Pittsburgh, 1972), 54.

180 In arguing that Milton presents Samson's military role as a model to be rejected, I am for once in marked disagreement with Christopher Hill; see his *Milton and the English Revolution*, 440–5, and 'Samson Agonistes Again,' *Literature and History* (2nd series), 1 (1990).

There is no difference in their roles.[181] Both Samson and Dalila are committed to the causes of their own peoples. What Milton presents here is the irreconcilability of opposed nationalist and religious politics. It is a barbarous confrontation: one people set against another, one religion set against another.

Samson's problem was that he wanted to separate his own brand of heroic activity – mass slaughter – from the rest of his life. His existence as a killing machine was political: but his sexual and marital relationships he saw as private. What he finds unacceptable is that Dalila becomes equally political. This can be interpreted as a sexism – the man's role is political, the woman's is not. But it is also a sexism markedly out of touch with realities. Dalila herself cites the Old Testament precedent of the Israelite Jael (989) – 'a telling stroke' as Empson remarks.[182] We can safely assume that Samson could have been aware of it, had he chosen. At the time that *Samson Agonistes* was published, Aphra Behn had already launched on her role as a political agent, a spy.[183] This was the contemporary world and there is no reason to think that Milton was unaware of it. We should be careful in identifying Samson's attitudes with Milton and so ascribing sexism to Milton here. But sexism is certainly a quality that Milton shows in Samson's attitudes – the old-style warrior of limited political vision who believes that the conflict should be kept to old-style massacres and is totally unable to accept the fact that the conflict, the nationalist politics, spread into every area of life and destroy the private, intimate, personal existence.

It needs to be stressed of course that Milton is not endorsing or supporting this spread of the political and this destruction of the domestic, intimate and sexual. We are not expected to agree when Dalila says

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181 But cf. Stanley Fish, 'Question and Answer in *Samson Agonistes*', *Critical Quarterly*, 2 (1969) 237–64, reprinted in Julian Lovelock, ed., *Milton: Comus and Samson Agonistes: A Casebook* (London, 1975), 209–45. Fish paraphrases Dalila's speech: 'In other words: what I did looks exactly like what was done by one of your reverend heroines. Where is the difference between us? And of course there is none, if we attend only to the appearances surrounding the two actions.' But he goes on to find differences. 'By taking a *series* of stances (some of them contradictory) in relation to her act, Dalila betrays the quality of her moral life. She is not prompted within her, by her 'conscience and internal peace', but by some abstract formula behaviour (like the Law) which is imposed from without and relieves her of the burden of making moral decisions; in a word, she is insincere. What Dalila does not see is that two persons may engage in superficially similar activities, yet still be distinguished on the basis of their respective *intentions;* in fact no other basis for distinguishing between them is reliable.' (240–1). However, Fish's distinctions do not seem relevant to, and indeed blur, the political point. For more positive interpretations of the presentation of Dalila, see Empson, *Milton's God*, 211–28; Heather Asals, 'In Defense of Dalila: *Samson Agonistes* and the Reformation Theology of the Word,' *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 74 (1975), 183–94; and Joyce Colony, 'An Argument for Milton's Dalila,' *Yale Review*, 66 (1977), 562–75.

182 Empson, *Milton's God*, 221.

183 In 1666. See Frederick M. Link, *Aphra Behn* (New York, 1968), 20–1.

at length that grounded maxim
So rife and celebrated in the mouths
Of wisest men; that to the public good
Private respects must yield; with grave authority
Took full possession of me and prevailed;
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty, so enjoining. (865–70)

When any of Milton's characters talk about 'public good' we need to be careful; they are usually politicians justifying some evil, like Satan in *Paradise Lost* using the concept of 'public reason' to justify the destruction of Adam and Eve. (IV. 389) Annotating that passage, Alastair Fowler cites Dalila's words as a comparable example of political talk to Satan's speech:

> Satan is here cast in the role of a contemporary Machiavellian politician, excusing the evil means he resorts to by appeals to such values as 'the common weal', 'the good of the state', 'policy' and *necessity* (I. 393). Cp. Dalila's excuse that she had finally been persuaded to betray Samson by 'that grounded maxim …'[184]

Samson's shock that the political conflict takes place not only in military situations but also in male-female relations is a mark of his naivety and political unawareness. And equally naively he is unable to see that Dalila's political position is no less valid than his. Anything that can be used to justify Samson's 'heroic acts' can be used to justify Dalila's. What is the difference here between Danites and Philistines? The drama never tells us. And it is crucially significant that we are never told. We are presented with one ethnic faction,[185] one religious group, against another. Samson believes he is divinely inspired and destined to become a national hero. After his death Manoah promises to 'build him /A monument' (1733–4).

Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,
And from his memory inflame their breasts
To matchless valour, and adventures high:

[184] *Poems of John Milton*, 636n.
[185] William Empson points out that 'Milton goes out of his way to suggest that Samson acts for an underprivileged class or minority group rather than a separate nation.' *Milton's God*, 213.

> The virgins also shall on feastful days
> Visit his tomb with flowers … (1738–42)

But Dalila, too, looks forward to a similar recognition.

> I shall be named among the famousest
> Of women, sung at solemn festivals,
> Living and dead recorded, who to save
> Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
> Above the faith of wedlock-bands, my tomb
> With odours visited and annual flowers. (982–7)

'It is one of the noblest speeches in Milton,' Empson writes of these lines, making the point that Delilah's patriotic politics are presented as on a par with Samson's.[186] But the consequence of these patriotic political commitments is that 'wedlock-bands', the private life, the domestic life and intimate life, are politicized and destroyed.

So this seeming celebration of an Old Testament heroic warrior becomes a questioning of the values of military solutions. They are not *solutions.* And if we then apply this to Milton's seventeenth-century political world – as his contemporary readers would inevitably have applied it – we can see a whole questioning of the revolution in which he had participated. Not a questioning of the values of the revolution – the challenge to despotic power, the attempts to achieve individual liberty, the moves towards social justice – but a questioning of the methods used. What is questioned is the military method, the attempts to achieve liberty by warfare. This was something Milton always questioned, from his sonnets to Cromwell and Fairfax, through *Paradise Lost* to *Paradise Regained.* In the end Samson's 'great act', his massacre of the Philistines, is deeply ambiguous, at the least, in moral terms, and fails to resolve anything. *Samson Agonistes* is a questioning rather that a celebration of its Old Testament hero, a questioning of military intervention in political situations.

[186] Empson, *Milton's God*, 221.

Something Better: Reflections on Fundamentalism, Revolution, Loss of Faith, and the Future

The city in which I grew up was famed for its part in resisting the militant fundamentalism that swept through Britain three and a half centuries ago. It was called 'the faithful city' in commemoration of its loyalty to the Stuart dynasty. The doors to the Guildhall were flanked by a statue of King Charles I on the one side and King Charles II on the other. Up on the lintel a demonic head was sculpted, nailed there by its ears. It was traditionally identified as the regicide Oliver Cromwell. Historians have questioned the identification, as they have also questioned the City's faithfulness. An examination of the records reveals that there had been an equivalent commitment to anti-monarchical sentiments. Like so much of the United Kingdom, it was in fact a deeply disunited city.

The ideological battles persisted through my childhood. In the 1950s some Socialist councillors arranged for a plaque on the canal bridge to commemorate Cromwell's crowning victory, as he had called the Battle of Worcester. The plaque enraged the Tories, and the old gentleman for whom my aunt was housekeeper was moved to pelt it with tomatoes. But in those days tomatoes, apart from tasting a lot better than now, were a comparatively rare commodity, so he didn't. Memories of the conflict were all around us; our next door neighbours kept their gate open with a cannonball plowed up on the site of the battle. But what was it all about?

Mrs Thatcher once announced, in a jibe at the bicentennial celebrations of the French revolution, that England had never had a revolution. She was wrong in this as in so much else. But terminology was, and continues to be, important here. It was left wing historians, like Christopher Hill, who categorized the upheaval of 1639–1660 as the English Revolution. Contemporary monarchists like the Earl of Clarendon had called it the Rebellion. If you preferred to avoid identifying with either faction you called it the Civil War. The nineteenth-century historian S. R. Gardiner had called it the Puritan Revolution, which indicated its militant fundamentalist roots.

In part it was a continuation of the old regional confrontations that had spawned the earlier Barons' wars, when local warlords slugged it out with each other, or with each others' troops. Charles I had tried to impose centralized control and rule without the trouble of Parliament. He turned to the church to implement his authority. A new book of common

prayer was imposed on the population. It stressed hierarchy, monarchy and acceptance of the contemporary social order, with set prayers for every occasion. The fundamentalist puritan preachers preferred divine inspiration and whatever spontaneous prayers that might come to mind. Some of their prayers were worrying to the absolutist tendencies of the monarchy. So were their sermons, which drew on interpretations of the Bible not always endorsive of the *status quo*. The archbishop tried to enforce an increase in church rituals, music and liturgy as a way of displacing spontaneous sermons that might question the existing system of church and state authority. This only encouraged the radical fundamentalists puritans to question more and more.

The confrontation drew on differing interpretations of the Holy Book. The issues were in part a radical puritan rejection of rituals and images, icons and church music. These were seen as the work of the great Satan, relics of paganism, which Roman Catholicism had absorbed and continued to employ. Satan's instrument on earth was the Church of Rome, from which England had broken free a century earlier. Charles and Archbishop Laud were suspected of being agents of Rome, attempting to suppress the protestant independence of England, that other Eden.

Inexorably the conflict moved from issues of church government to a social revolution, still firmly anchored in a fundamentalist reading of the Holy Book. The debate was undertaken in religious terms, with the Bible being rifled for precedents for what were in effect social and political positions. There was no way issues of power, authority and property could be expressed in openly political terms. That would have been classed as treason and sedition and dealt with by summary execution. As it was, radical puritans were often enough subjected to hideous torture and degradation: whipped through the streets, put in the pillory, lopped of their ears, and imprisoned in appalling conditions. The political was the inexpressible. It was forbidden to publish domestic news. Censorship was rigorous. It was only after civil war broke out that newspapers, reporting domestic events, came into being. They were partisan from the beginning, monarchists and parliamentarians each offering their own paper. There never was political balance in the press; it was, as now, always partisan.

The fundamentalist puritan radicals feared that Charles I was going to return England to the Roman Catholic yoke with the aid of a coalition of foreign troops, French, Spanish, and Irish, and impose a reactionary, absolutist, rule subservient to Rome with its agenda of global domination and the repression of any dissent. England would once again become a client state. Those lawyers and landowners who had benefited from Henry VIII's break with Rome

were fearful that the lands they had acquired from the dissolution of the monasteries and the confiscation of the Catholic estates would be taken from them. They consequently supported the struggle against Charles. The City of London financiers refused to lend Charles more money, and since he was ruling without parliament he could not get new taxes approved. The Scots Presbyterian church did not accept the authority of the bishops, who were being used to implement Charles' centralized control, and refused to accept the new prayer book. Charles raised an army to suppress the Scots.

The soldiers pressed into the army spent their time smashing the stained-glass windows and defacing the icons and images in the churches they passed on their march into Scotland. To fundamentalists and radicals, stained glass windows, images and icons, represented idol worship and the reactionary foreign power of the papacy. The very army Charles attempted to employ was in considerable part ideologically opposed to the values it was assembled to impose. Seeing a regime momentarily immobilized, the Irish seized the opportunity to attempt to throw off England's oppressive, colonial rule. Soon it was open and guerilla warfare on multiple fronts throughout the British Isles.

When political possibilities are inexpressible, when radical options have been repressed or extirpated, they will necessarily find their outlet under other guises. Religious, tribal or regional affiliations offer a focus and provide the vehicle for the displaced political and social. The iconoclastic frenzy of the fundamentalists had its socio-political as well as its religious aspect. It was not only images of the Virgin Mary and the saints that were smashed. English churches were also burial sites for the ruling class, landowners, squires and local lords. Their tombs frequently had carvings on top or around them, graven images of the dignitaries buried within. Slicing off the noses and arms and legs of these images satisfied not only the puritan fundamentalist hostility to idols and icons, it also allowed expression of a class hostility to the rulers and property owners. Within religious fundamentalism was a powerful class resentment.

As the revolution progressed, the political and class war aspects began to emerge. The soldiers assembled by parliament to resist Charles' army spent much of their time encamped, guarding bridges, fords and roads to hold back impending attack. Most of them had never before been away from their home villages. As they sat around, they compared notes on their life experiences. In a world without media, it was their first opportunity to see things in a larger perspective. The consequence was a ferment of radical ideas. They began by questioning monarchical authority, which suited the lawyers and city financiers and local

warlords who had recruited them, and moved on to questioning all authority, and ultimately the very idea of private property. Genesis, they noted, had portrayed the creation as a place and time of common ownership, egalitarianism, freedom. As Gerrard Winstanley wrote in 1649 in *The True Levellers' Standard Advanced*:

> In the beginning of time, the great creator Reason made the earth to be a common treasury, to preserve the beasts, birds, fishes and man, the lord that was to govern this creation, for man had domination given to him, over the beasts, birds and fishes: but not one word was spoken in the beginning, that one branch of mankind should rule over another. And the reason is this. Every single man, male and female, is a perfect creature of himself.[187]

The radical fundamentalists saw it as their mission to restore that primal Edenic state. From a fundamentalist religious base they moved to a fundamentalist communist vision. The Levellers, the Ranters, and the Diggers, as the various movements were known, began developing a blueprint for a new society.

At this point the parliamentarians under Cromwell, having decapitated Charles I, turned their attention to the radical ferment. For them things had gone too far. They progressively eliminated the radicals, came to accommodation with the royalist exiles, restored the monarchy, and the revolution was at an end.

John Milton's life and work provide an exemplary case study of the times.[188] His earliest published pamphlets dealt with theological issues of church government. Next he moved on to issues of social authority, dealing first with divorce, then censorship. Soon he was justifying rebellion and resistance to earthly rulers, and celebrating regicide and republicanism.

After the collapse of the republic and the restoration of Charles II, things changed rapidly. Regime change brought in retribution. At one point, as a supporter of the regicides, Milton was thrown in prison. The fact that he was now blind saved him from execution – a fate meted out to a number of the revolutionaries – on the grounds that God had already punished him. But he remained in danger of assassination from Royalist hit squads, and a

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[187] Gerrard Winstanley, *The True Levellers' Standard Advanced: or the State of Community Opened and Presented to the Sons of Men* (1649) in *Winstanley: The Law of Freedom and Other Writings*, ed. Christopher Hill (Harmondsworth, 1973), 150.

[188] On Milton's career, see Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1978).

number of his books were ordered to be publicly burned. There is reason to think that Milton had already become disillusioned with the course of Cromwellian rule. But disillusion was one thing; the recognition of defeat was something else again. Loss of faith and despair were now the danger.

It was during these years that he wrote *Paradise Lost*, his epic meditation on the origin of evil and the fall of man. He turned back to the Bible narrative. There was no way he could have written explicitly about the failed revolution. Press censorship was firmly in place again, and he remained under surveillance. To write on religious topics was no guarantee of respectability. These were the years when John Bunyan was imprisoned for unlicensed preaching, locked up for twelve years in all.[189] Before *Paradise Lost* could be published it was examined by the censor, who suspected something subversive in the mention of an eclipse that 'with fear of change / Perplexes monarchs' (I. 598–9).[190] The Restoration ruling class was indeed very fearful of change; anything perplexing monarchs needed to be looked at carefully. The anecdote is usually cited to show the absurdity of the censor, but in this case the censor was surely right. It was one of a number of anti-monarchical notes embedded in Milton's text, one of his assertions that there remained the possibility of change.

Paradise Lost undoubtedly contains Milton's reflections on the revolution and counter-revolution he had lived through. It includes much else as well, of course. But his identification of the Great Satan and his followers with militarism, absolutism and puppet parliamentarianism is unambiguous. So is his definition of the lost paradise as a place of egalitarianism and communism. The Biblical Nimrod is explicitly condemned for having dared

> to aspire
> Above his brethren, to himself assuming
> Authority usurped, from God not given:
> He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl
> Dominion absolute; that right we hold
> By his donation; but man over men
> He made not lord; such title to himself

[189] On Bunyan's oppositional career, see Jack Lindsay, *John Bunyan: Maker of Myths* (London, 1937), and Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious and Factious People: John Bunyan and His Church 1628–1688* (Oxford, 1988).

[190] The censor's suspicions are related in John Toland, *Life of John Milton* (1698), reprinted in Helen Darbishire, ed., *The Early Lives of Milton* (London, 1932), 180.

Reserving, human left from human free. (XII. 64–71)

The revolutionary sentiments shared with the Digger Winstanley are unambiguously reasserted. And not only does Milton declare the original creation to be one of 'fair equality, fraternal state' (XII. 26), it was also one of common ownership. There was no private property, earth was 'a common treasury.' Celebrating the institution of marriage, in contrast to the Ranters who had advocated sexual sharing, Milton writes:

Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring, sole propriety
In Paradise of all things common else. (IV. 750–52)

With the exception of marriage partners, everything in Paradise was held in common.

Living quietly and unobtrusively, Milton nonetheless kept in touch with various dissidents. One of these was a Quaker, Thomas Elwood, who, upon release from gaol for unlicensed preaching, visited Milton. This is his account.

> After some common discourses had passed between us, he called for a manuscript of his; which being brought he delivered it to me, bidding me take it home with me, and read it at my leisure: and when I had so done, return it to him, with my judgement thereupon.
>
> When I came home, and had set myself to read it, I found it was that excellent poem, which he entitled *Paradise Lost.* After I had, with the best attention, read it through, I made him another visit, and returned him his book, with due acknowledgment of the favour he had done me, in communicating it to me. He asked me how I liked it, and what I thought of it; which I modestly, but freely told him: and after some further discourse about it, I pleasantly said to him, 'Thou has said much here of *Paradise Lost;* but what has thou to say on *Paradise found*?' He made me no answer, but sat some time in a muse: then brake off that discourse, and fell upon another subject.[191]

[191] Elwood's reminiscence is quoted in Darbishire, *ibid*., introduction, lvi.

Having just written the greatest English epic poem, no wonder Milton ‘sat some time in a muse’ at Elwood’s chirpy question. No wonder he ‘brake off that discourse, and fell upon another subject.’ And yet it was a far from idiotic question. Elwood, believing in God’s providence, was not prepared passively to surrender to defeat. The revolution had failed, religious and political freedom had been set back, but life had to go on. Having read Milton’s account of the causes of loss and defeat, now he asked for a guide on how to remake a life, how to regain the lost paradise.

Some time later Elwood visited Milton again. ‘He showed me his second poem, called *Paradise Regain’d*; and in a pleasant tone said to me, ‘This is owing to you; for you put it into my head, by the question you put to me at Chalfont; which before I had not thought of.’’

Milton was not being strictly accurate in saying he had not thought of it before. Although the Paradisal garden is lost, Adam is assured at the end of *Paradise Lost* that ‘thou … shalt possess / A paradise within thee, happier far.’ (XII. 585–7). But it is certainly the case that Milton makes the theme of the paradise within a lot clearer in *Paradise Regained.*

There is no doubt that Milton was thinking of the failure of the revolution and its social reforms in his two great poems. The times he lived in were much as ours. The brave experiments of communism and socialism seem to have collapsed, just as the English revolution collapsed. But the English Revolution was to live on as a model to inspire later generations. Humanity’s aspirations for a better world are irrepressible.

The message of *Paradise Regained*, however, was that the revolution must be internal. Imposing a new social order by violent means is not the answer. The Son of God recalls how in his youth he had wanted to be a freedom fighter: ‘victorious deeds / Flamed in my heart, heroic acts, one while / To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke, / Thence to subdue and quell o’er all the earth / Brute violence and proud tyrannic power.’ (I. 215–19) But that is to use the Satanic weaponry of military might, which the Son comes to reject:

> But if there be in glory aught of good,
> It may by means far different be attained
> Without ambition, war, or violence. (III. 88–90)

The priority is to achieve self-government before attempting to govern others.

> Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules

Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king;
Which every wise and virtuous man attains:
And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
Cities of men, or headstrong multitudes,
Subject himself to anarchy within,
Or lawless passions in him which he serves. (II. 466–72)

It is not a recommendation to quietism, as has sometimes been asserted. The Son continues:

But to guide nations in the way of truth
By saving doctrine, and from error lead
To know, and, knowing worship God aright,
Is yet more kingly. (II. 473–6)

The propaganda role remains. Milton is not recommending putting your head down and saying nothing. He is not recommending abandoning revolutionary principles, adjusting to the times and going into business and making a fortune, as many Quakers did – the Lloyds of Lloyds bank, notably. He is not recommending surrendering to despair, as did the Greek poet Yannis Ritsos who, already in ill health, on the news of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe stopped eating and drinking and starved himself to death. Milton resolutely refuses to surrender to any loss of faith.

Milton had always been a propagandist. He had never been an advocate of militarism, even in the early years of the civil war. War and militarism are identified with Satan's practice in *Paradise Lost* and shown in all the ultimate failure of their professed aims. But the end of the twenty-year revolution required a major change in strategy. From being Cromwell's Latin secretary, from writing political tracts in support of the revolution and the republic, Milton had to refashion himself as a private individual, though he ensured that his poetry still remained public. And out of this change, out of the collapse of a revolution to which he had massively committed himself, in the course of whose service writing propaganda he had lost his sight, out of a situation unimaginably demoralizing, he emerged to write some of the greatest poetry in the English language.

There is nothing esoteric about the message the Son delivers in *Paradise Regained*. Some two and a quarter centuries later in Australia, William Lane delivered the same

message at the end of his novel *The Workingman's Paradise* (1892).[192] Lane inherited that radical Puritanism of the seventeenth century: Milton and Bunyan were two of his cultural heroes. He wrote his novel to raise money for the Queensland unionists gaoled on conspiracy charges after the collapse of the great Shearers' strike. It was a time of massive defeat for the Australian trade union movement. From the end of those hopes came a new beginning. Lane decided to opt out of the society, set off for Paraguay, and set up a new community there, New Australia. Geisner, the political visionary, says at the end of the novel:

> Let us not be deceived! It is in ourselves that the weakness is. It is in ourselves that the real fight must take place between the Old and the New. It is because we ourselves value our miserable lives, because we ourselves cling to the old fears and kneel still before the old idols, that the Thought remains a thought only, that it does not create the New Order which will make of this weary world a Paradise indeed.
>
> Neither ballots nor bullets will avail us unless we strive ourselves to be men, to be worthier to be the dwelling houses of this Thought of which even the dream is filling the world with madness divine. To curb our own tongues, to soften our own hearts, to be sober ourselves, to be virtuous ourselves, to trust each other – at least to try – this we must do before we can justly expect of others that they should do it …[193]

New Australia failed, and Lane made a further attempt, Colonia Cosme, which lasted somewhat longer but in the end collapsed. Historians tend to classify both experiments as utopias, and hence bound to fail. The presence of political agents, provocateurs and saboteurs, was the more immediate cause. We can chose to dwell on the lost paradises, on the end of hopes, and surrender to loss of faith; or we can focus on new beginnings, on the eternal aspiration for something better.

Henry Lawson knew Lane and contributed some of his more revolutionary verses to the *Worker*, the trades-union paper Lane edited in Brisbane. Lawson wrote a poem,

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[192] On William Lane see Lloyd Ross, *William Lane and the Australian Labour Movement* (1937) (Sydney, 1982; Gavin Souter, *A Peculiar People: The Australians in Paraguay* (Sydney, 1968); Michael Wilding, *The Paraguayan Experiment* (Ringwood and Harmondsworth, 1985); Don Gobbett and Malcolm Saunders, *With Lane in Paraguay: Harry Taylor of 'The Murray Pioneer' 1873–1932* (Rockhampton, 1995); Ann Whitehead, *Paradise Deferred* (St Lucia, 1998).

[193] 'John Miller' (i.e., William Lane), *The Workingman's Paradise: an Australian Labour Novel* (1892), facsimile reprint (Sydney, 1980), 225; on Milton and Bunyan, 63–4.

‘Something Better’ for Lane’s movement and it was published in the *New Australia* journal, 24 March 1894. It makes a fitting conclusion.

Though the workers’ bitter struggle for a better state of things
May not touch the man in reach of all the joys that money brings,
There are times, and very often, when such joys begin to pall,
And his better nature rises in revolt against it all,
Stirring up the nobler manhood that is in him even now,
Like the hand of some pure woman on a dying blackguard’s brow.

’Tis the hope of something better than the present or the past –
’Tis the wish for something better strong within us till the last –
Stronger still in dissipation – ’tis the longing to ascend –
’Tis the hope of something better that will save us in the end.

Give a man all earthly treasures – give him genuine love and pelf –
Yet at times he’ll get disgusted with the world and with himself;
And at times there comes a vision in his conscience-stricken nights,
Of a land where ‘Vice’ is cleanly, of a land of pure delights;
And the better state of living which we sneer at as ‘ideal’,
Seems before him in the distance – very far, but very real.

’Tis the hope of something better than the present or the past;
’Tis the wish for something better – strong within us till the last.
’Tis the longing for redemption as our ruined souls descend;
’Tis the hope of something better that will save us in the end.

Jonson, Sin and Milton

In his answer to Sir William Burlase, ‘The Poet to the Painter’, Ben Jonson describes himself thus:

> Why? though I seeme of a prodigious wast,
> I am not so voluminous, and vast,
> But there are lines, wherewith I might b'embrac'd.
> 'Tis true, as my wombe swells, so my back stoupes,
> And the whole Iumpe grows round, deform'd, and droupes. . . .

The striking phrase ‘voluminous and vast’ is disconcertingly echoed in Milton's description of Sin in *Paradise Lost*, II, 650-657, and the context of the phrase in both passages has similarities—the ‘waist’ in close proximity, the deformed shape, and the huge ‘wombe’:

> The one seemd Woman to the waist, and fair,
> But ended foul in many a scaly fold
> Voluminous and vast, a Serpent armd
> With mortal sting: about her middle round
> A cry of Hell Hounds never ceasing barkd
> With wide Cerberean mouths full loud, and rung
> A hideous Peal; yet when they list, would creep,
> If aught disturbd thir noise, into her wombe. . . .

Paradise Lost and *Fanny Hill*

Allusions to *Paradise Lost* by eighteenth-century writers are not uncommon, but one startling context for an echo from the poem that perhaps merits recording is John Cleland's novel *Fanny Hill* (1749). In 'Letter the Second' Fanny takes up residence at Mrs Cole's establishment, and her ceremonial initiation there is the 'country dancing', the sexual tournament of four couples taken in turns, with the non-participants watching until and after their own turn. The beginning of the activities is described thus:

> The first that stood up, to open the ball, were a cornet of horse, and that sweetest of olive-beauties, the soft and amorous Louisa. He led her to the couch 'nothing loth', on which he gave her the fall, and extended her at her length with an air of roughness and vigour, relishing high of amorous eagerness and impatience.[194]

The enclosure of 'nothing loth' within quotation marks draws attention to the phrase, whose source is *Paradise Lost*, IX.1039. Adam has just expressed to Eve how her beauties

> so inflame my sense
> With ardour to enjoy thee, fairer now
> Than ever, bounty of this virtuous tree.
> So said he, and forbore not glance or toy
> Of amorous intent, well understood
> Of Eve, whose eye darted contagious fire.
> Her hand he seized, and to a shady bank,
> Thick overhead with verdant roof embowered
> He led her nothing loth; flowers were the couch,
> Pansies, and violets, and asphodel,
> And hyacinth, earth's freshest softest lap.
> There they their fill of love and love's disport
> Took largely, of their mutual guilt the seal,
> The solace of their sin, till dewy sleep

[194] I quote from the text of the G. P. Putnam, New York, first paperback edition, 130.

Oppressed them, wearied with their amorous play. (IX. 1031–45) [195]

Apart from the rewriting of Milton's line 'he led her nothing loth; flowers were the couch' as 'he led her to the couch 'nothing loth'', Cleland makes other allusions to the original. The cornet of horse's 'roughness and vigour' find a counterpart in Adam's 'Her hand he seized', and the 'fall' Louisa is given makes its reference to the Fall that Adam and Eve have just experienced and are now celebrating. Much of the wit of the echo comes from the introduction of so sublime an original into such a context, with Milton's seriousness about sexuality implicitly ridiculed. But there is also an unironic appropriateness that the first act of post-lapsarian intercourse should serve as a model for a classic of sexual licence. The ritualistic nature of Adam and Eve's act, making its contrast with their earlier innocent sexuality and now marking their entry into mutual guilt is a fitting source for the initiatory act of this second stage of Fanny's life.

[195] *The Poems of John Milton*, edited by John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London, 1968),

Allusion and Innuendo in Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*

Readers of John Dryden are familiar with his extensive use of literary allusion. His allusions are perhaps more precise, however, and require a closer knowledge of the text alluded to, than has always been realized. The fullest perception of the wit of *MacFlecknoe* is reserved to those few who are especially 'literate'. Yet alongside and co-existent with this appeal to a highly sophisticated readership, Dryden directs a different sort of allusion – innuendo – requiring no specialist knowledge. He uses the simple crudities of innuendo, however, with that subtlety and sophisticated suggestiveness with which he uses allusions. Literary allusion and vulgar innuendo are basic structures in *MacFlecknoe* and the two are fully and inseparably involved at the poem's climax. Dryden was not simply attempting to appeal to a wide range of readers. The two sorts of allusion – to the epic and to obscenity – created an important collocation, the unlikeness of the two sets of referents creating the surprise and tension of wit. The full effectiveness of both the literary and the obscene depends on the existence of the other. The merely obscene would have limited *MacFlecknoe* to the lampoon or diatribe: there would have been little humour other than that issuing from calling somebody a rude name. However, had the literary allusion alone been present, the effect of the poem would have been reduced to good clean literary fun. The obscenity allied to the literary allusions emphasizes the degradation of poetry (established by references to *Paradise Lost*, the *Aeneid* and the *Davideis)* brought about by the writings of Flecknoe and Shadwell: it suggests some of that moral commitment with which (whether honestly or not) Dryden attacks the 'steaming Ordures of the Stage' in the *Ode* to Anne Killigrew. While the literary allusions allied to the obscenity create a taut contrast of tone – the surprise of inappropriateness found in Swift or William Burroughs.

The single action of *MacFlecknoe* is the coronation of Shadwell as Flecknoe's successor. The pretensions of Flecknoe and Shadwell are brought out by the basic literary allusions. The image of the poet-king is established by an allusion to Abraham Cowley's *Davideis*, 'the tuneful strings of David's lyre' being parodied grotesquely in the lutes of Flecknoe and Shadwell in II. 35, 44. The Imperial pretensions, established in II. 3–4 ('Flecknoe … like Augustus, young / Was call'd to Empire') are sustained by allusions to Virgil's *Aeneid*; '*Aeneas*, Author of the *Roman* line' in Dryden's translation (XII. 245) becomes by a deliberately bad pun the type these 'authors 'aspire to imitate.

Similarly, as 'creators' in a literary sense, they aspire to imitate the Creator, whose presence is brought into play by the allusions to Milton's *Paradise Lost* – an aspiration blasphemous in its presumptuousness. So, at the high point of the poem, occurs the straightforward and often remarked use of allusion. The consecration of Saul by Samuel who 'takes the sacred *Viol*, and does shed / A *Crown* of mystique drops around his head'[196] provides the noble context and rhyme for the debased action:

> The *Syre* then shook the honours of his head,
> And from his brows damps of oblivion shed
> Full on the filial dullness. (134–6)[197]

The 'damps' and 'dullness' have extinguished and darkened the dignity of the light and enlightenment of *Paradise Lost*, where the Father 'on his Son with rays direct /Shone full'. (VI. 719-20)[198] prior to Christ's enthronement. Similarly the lights have been darkened in the description of Shadwell sitting beside Flecknoe:

> At his right hand our young *Ascanius* sate
> *Rome*'s other hope, and pillar of the State.
> His Brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace,
> And lambent dullness plaid around his face. (108–11)

The original passages in the *Aeneid* are full of light – the careful reader would recognize its eclipse here. Dryden's own translation makes the point clearly:

> Strange to relate, from young *Iulus* Head
> A lambent Flame arose, which gently spread
> Around his Brows, and on his Temples fed. (II. 931–3)

> And now in Pomp the peaceful Kings appear:
> Four steeds the Chariot of *Latinus* bear:
> Twelve golden Beams around his Temples play,

196 *Davideis* IV: *Poems* of Cowley, ed. A. R. Waller (Cambridge, 1905), 375.
197 *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. James Kinsley, 4 volumes (Oxford, 1958).
198 *The Poems of John Milton*, edited by John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London, 1968).

To mark his Lineage from the God of Day.
Two snowy Coursers *Turnus* Chariot yoke,
And in his Hand two Massy Spears he shook:
Then issu'd from the Camp, in Arms Divine,
Aeneas, Author of the *Roman* line:
And by his side *Ascanius* took his place. (XII. 245–53)

The function of the allusions in these passages is simple. The heroic is referred to so that by contrast we see Flecknoe and Shadwell as figures of mock-heroic. The substitution of darkness for light is spelled out, and in its explicitness this directs us to further instances. The often noted echoes of the *Davideis* are echoes enforcing this basic metaphor of *MacFlecknoe* – darkness and fog. The metaphor is enforced here, however, not by the simple explicit substitution of darkness for light as in the *Aeneid* allusions. There is no darkness imagery in the description of the poets' breeding ground:

Where their vast Courts the Mother-Strumpets keep,
And, undisturb'd by Watch, in silence sleep.
Near these a Nursery erects its head,
Where Queens are form'd, and future Hero's bred;
Where unfledg'd Actors learn to laugh and cry,
Where infant Punks their tender voices try. (72–7)

A reader unfamiliar with the *Aeneid* would understand the darkness for light substitution. But only a reader familiar with the *Davideis* would recognize the implicit darkness imagery in the poet's nursery:

Where their vast *Court* the *Mother-waters* keep,
And undisturb'd by *Moons* in silence sleep,
There is a place deep, wondrous deep below,
Which genuine *Night* and *Horrour* does o'reflow;
No bound controls th'unwearied space, but *Hell*
Endless as those dire pains that in it dwell.
…

Here *Lucifer* the mighty *Captive* reigns.[199]

The full metaphoric texture of *MacFlecknoe* can be seen only by recognizing the full context of the allusions, where the metaphors are explicitly established. The basic metaphor of darkness and light is basic, too, to *Paradise Lost* and we might expect Dryden to allude to that not only to sustain implicitly his metaphorical pattern, but also to establish a heroic base for his mock-heroic.

The enthronement of Christ is the central episode of *Paradise Lost* and we have seen how this is alluded to at the enthronement of Shadwell. But, though the enthronement is the numerological centre of *Paradise Lost*,[200] the central action in our memories of the poem tends to be Satan's attempted usurpation. For Dryden, as well as for later readers, Satan possessed the usual qualities of the hero. So in *MacFlecknoe* the episode we might first expect to be parodied from *Paradise Lost*, and that at first seems to be the episode to be parodied (Christ's enthronement), is in fact displaced by the Satanic attempt to imitate the Godhead. It is this that provides the base for the actual parody. In Flecknoe's opening speech to Shadwell we soon find an allusion to *Paradise Lost:*

Sh— alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullness from his tender years.
Sh— alone, of all my Sons, is he
Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity. (15–18)

The reader aware of the poem's allusiveness will notice the blasphemous aspect, Flecknoe's pretensions to Divinity. 'Confirm'd' suggests a religious context, and 'perfect image' the way Christ is an image of God, or the way man is an image of God. Within a few lines (29–34) Flecknoe compares himself implicitly with John the Baptist, and compares Shadwell with Christ, by alluding to Matthew iii, 3–4. However, the allusions are not as simple as that. For 'perfect image', though a phrase from *Paradise Lost*, is not an allusion to the Son's relationship to God. The Son is 'the radiant image of his glory' (III. 63): and Adam and Eve

199 Ed. Waller, 244.

200 Christ is enthroned on the divine chariot at the median point of the whole poem (falling between lines VI, 76I-2) in its first edition. Yet the numerology of Paradise Lost is fraught with difficulty; after the immense labour of the blind poet to establish this median point, in the second edition of the poem the point is moved off-centre by the addition of further lines. It is incomprehensible why Milton, having established a significant mid-point, should not have troubled to preserve it by adding a few balancing lines in the earlier books.

are described not as ‘perfect image’, but ‘in their looks divine / The image of their glorious maker shone’ (IV. 291–2). For ‘perfect image’ we have to turn to Sin’s description of how Satan fell in love with her, his daughter:

> Thy self in me thy perfect image viewing
> Becamest enamoured. (II. 764–5)

Flecknoe and Shadwell are not like God and Christ, but like the depraved, narcissistic, incestuous, obscene parody of the God–Christ relationship, Sin and Satan. The reference in Flecknoe’s speech to Shadwell’s ‘genuine night’ (23) with its allusion to Cowley’s Hell should direct the reader to the correct path. This is a ‘perfect image’ seen in Hell, in darkness, not in Heaven’s light. The ‘radiant’ of Christ’s image of God, the ‘shone’ of mankind’s, are noticeably excluded. Similarly when we see Flecknoe on his throne, it is not God’s throne that is alluded to.

> The hoary Prince in Majesty appear’d,
> High on a Throne of his own Labours rear’d. (106–7)

When we first see God in *Paradise Lost*, he

> High throned above all highth, bent down his eye,
> His own works and their works at once to view. (III. 58–9)

God’s throne is outside human dimensions and the works he looks down on have nothing in common with Flecknoe’s labours that Flecknoe uses for a throne. But Flecknoe’s labours in their dullness (those boring books) are a sad parody of the brightness of Satan’s throne, and the first five words of the description of Satan enthroned are picked up by Dryden:

> High on a throne of a royal state, which far
> Outshon the wealth of Ormus and of Ind. (II. 1–2)

Again, brightness and light from the original are excluded in the borrowing; again, Satan not God is the original imitated.

Dryden's allusions have become, then, increasingly sophisticated. To appreciate them it is not enough to have a general awareness of their source. The ideal reader has a precise knowledge of the minute detail of the passage alluded to. The reader without this knowledge would still find wit in *MacFlecknoe*, but of a simple mock-heroic nature – Flecknoe parodying God. But the proper wit of the poem is that Flecknoe can only parody a parody of God, that he and Shadwell are trapped by the imagery of Hell.

The action at the numerological centre of *Paradise Lost* is the enthronement of Christ in the paternal chariot and we have already noted how the description of the Father–Son relationship from this central event (VI. 718–22) is echoed, off-centre, in *MacFlecknoe.* But though the central event of *MacFlecknoe* is an enthronement, we have seen that the throne, and the 'perfect image' relationship, refer not to God, but to Satan. In the Shadwell–Flecknoe usurpation, the Satanic has been shifted to the poem's centre: and it is the post-fall Satanic, not even Satan's usurping throne in Heaven before the war that is alluded to. The central line of *MacFlecknoe* is '*Rome*'s other hope, and pillar of the State.' (109) The Virgilian allusion we have noted. And 'pillar of the state' is perhaps not simply an empty cliché. Such emptiness is rare in Dryden, and it makes good sense to read the phrase as an allusion to Beelzebub in *Paradise Lost* who is called 'a pillar of state' (II. 302). At the poem's centre, the hellish, not the heavenly, is insisted upon. Similarly, when Shadwell is likened to 'Monarch Oakes, that shade the plain' (27) the comparison is not one of simple mock heroism. Certainly on that level there is a wit: the comparison is so inappropriate, and there is the further irony that the oaks 'shade', dully obscuring light. But if we pursue the pattern of allusion to *Paradise Lost* and the *Davideis*, we will find that the only oaks in *Paradise Lost* are in Hell, or used hellishly for Satan's cannon; and that the only oaks in the *Davideis* are similarly related to evil powers – called 'Heaven-threatening Oaks', compared to Goliath, or containing the honey that Jonathan eats on the day that food is forbidden, so nearly resulting in his execution.[201] The oak here is not an heroic image inverted by Dryden as mock heroic, but a symbol of the forces of darkness and destruction. Flecknoe and Shadwell are firmly associated with the darkness of Hell. The 'admiring throng' at the coronation (132) recalls the opening of Pandemonium in *Paradise Lost* – 'The hasty multitude/Admiring entered' (I. 730), and 'all access was thronged.' (I. 761) The 'immortal war on wit' (12) that Flecknoe looks for a son to sustain echoes Satan's 'immortal hate' (I. 107) against God and the realms of light. James Sutherland once observed that Flecknoe's opening speech rested on a sort of

201 *Paradise Lost*, I. 613; VI. 574; *Davideis* 339, 387, 391.

ironical ‘Evil, be thou my good’.[202] Flecknoe and Shadwell are not types of ‘Creators’ at all, but types of Satan, the ‘destroyer’.

We are now some way from the simple allusion of mock-heroic. By this subtler pattern of allusion (available only to those few readers who could appreciate the specificity of these references) Dryden has established the full hopelessness of Flecknoe and Shadwell. They have aspired, blasphemously, to great heights. But like Milton’s devils, when they try to imitate godliness, they achieve only comic parody, parody reflecting not on the object parodied but recoiling back on the unGodly imitators. Flecknoe and Shadwell, however, are even worse off than the devils. The devils in trying to imitate God can achieve only parody. Sadly, when Flecknoe and Shadwell try, they can produce only the parody of a parody. They are not even parodying the Godhead, but only the previous parody. They cannot achieve even the limited dignity of the fallen angels – even Satan’s throne is more splendid than Flecknoe’s.

For those who recognize the allusions, Flecknoe and Shadwell are shown as absurd and contemptible. For those who don’t, a different area of allusion is introduced to achieve the same result The innuendo requires no comparable minute knowledge of the subtleties of a text, of the minute verbal discriminations between the divine and the Satanic. The innuendo brings in the second major strand of metaphor in the poem. Sexual creativity and poetic creativity are made analogous, and the metaphor is of the replacement of true sexual-literary creation by sterility, barrenness, defecation, and urination. In the adaptation of Cowley’s description of Hell we have already seen the introduction of Mother-Strumpets for Mother Waters. Cowley’s Hell has become a place of ‘Brothel-houses’ (70), ‘infant winds’ have become ‘infant punks’. Flecknoe and Shadwell, fully sharing the devils’ sexual depravity (as the Sin allusion suggested) have no share in the devils’ compensating dignity. *MacFlecknoe*’s hell is merely a brothel quarter. Prostitution is a relevant image for the debasement of their art. But the other point about prostitution is its perversion of sexuality: it is non-procreative – or if accidentally creative, its products are usually illegitimate. The relevance of this to bad writers is obvious: not only are they selling out for cash, but their works either do not appear, or are abortive, still-born or debased. Dryden allows for all these possibilities. So when we see Shadwell enthroned, we need not be surprised that his regalia expresses the non-creativeness – the impotency – of ‘Father’ Flecknoe and his heir.

[202] James Sutherland, *English Satire* (London, 1958), 56.

In his sinister hand, instead of Ball,
He plac'd a mighty Mug of potent Ale;
Love's Kingdom to his right he did convey,
At once his Sceptre and his rule of Sway;
Whose righteous Lore the Prince had practis'd young,
And from whose Loyns recorded *Psyche* sprung. (120–5)

The ale is a debasement of the true poetic inspiration. Samuel Butler summoned up his burlesque muse in *Hudibras* with the invocation

Thou that with Ale, or viler Liquors
Didst inspire *Withers*, *Pryn* and *Vickars*,
And force them, though it were in spight
Of nature and their stars, to write. (I. i. 640–3)[203]

Shadwell, indeed, begins his 'Letter … to Wicherley'

Inspir'd with high and mighty Ale,
That does with stubborn Muse prevail.[204]

But it is not only to Shadwell's habitual drinking and associated bad writing that Dryden alludes. In his left hand the monarch holds 'instead of Ball', 'potent Ale'. Dryden does not write 'orb', though it is the orb and sceptre to which he refers. The explanation hardly lies in the necessities of rhyme (ball / ale was never a good rhyme; its badness, it is likely, is deliberate, to attract attention). The implications are sexual, as 'potent' reinforces. We are meant to think not of an orb, but of a 'ball', a testicle (and only one, at that). Having thought of that, we realize that Father Flecknoe (celibate as a priest) and his necessarily unbegotten, adopted 'son' Shadwell are ball-less, possessing instead a mug of potent ale. The point lies in the pun on 'potent': potent balls beget, procreate: potent ale, by contrast, causes sleep, produces neither offspring nor literature. Dryden has introduced the image of monarchical regalia; then he has superimposed a degrading parody – raised the idea of a testicle in the

203 *Hudibras*, ed. John Wilders (Oxford, 1967).
204 *Complete Works of Shadwell*, ed. Montague Summers (London, 1927), vol. 5, 277.

hand rather than orb; and then he has established his final version – a mug of ale rather than orb or testicle for these monarchs of wit

Similarly in his other hand the monarch holds a sceptre. It is an obvious phallic image without any verbal shifts. But this sceptre, and hence this excuse for a phallus, is *Love's Kingdom* – one of Flecknoe's works, whose title readily implies a sexual meaning. The phallus, though, is usually love's 'king', 'a great prince'. The kingdom – 'O my America, my Newfoundland' – is the female genitalia. And the ensuing reference to the birth of Psyche strengthens the image of female loins.

Once again we have a basic image of the monarch holding a sceptre; the obscene parody of this – monarch holding phallus; and in the case of Flecknoe and now Shadwell, holding instead of a phallus one of Flecknoe's literary works (as soporific and unstimulating to creativity as the potent ale) that is a type not of male, but of female genitalia. The reference to Shadwell's pregnancy (41) makes more consistent sense when we find later he has the sexual characteristics of a woman, and the pattern is sustained with the reference to femininity (though ugly as Sin) basic to the allusion in 'perfect image'. It is the final sexual insult: no balls, no penis. The attack is on the virility of Flecknoe and Shadwell – the crudest and most obvious of insults. But it is a reply in kind to Shadwell's jeer at Dryden's sexual-literary abilities in 'The Medal of John Bayes', 'An old gelt Mastiff has more mirth than thou.'[205]

The basic implications of non-creativity are sustained in the poppies binding the monarch's temples in the next couplet. Poppies, Kinsley notes, were soporific (like ale, *Love's Kingdom*, and *Psyche*), parching and sterilizing, aphrodisiac but not fertilizing. And the sexual innuendo is continued when Flecknoe intones:

> Beyond loves Kingdom let him stretch his Pen;
> He paus'd, and all the people cry'd *Amen.* (143–4)

Editors cite Nehemiah VIII, 6 for the rhyming line – but this seems to be an allusion of Dryden's differing from the others in having no point. It is deliberately meaningless – brought in hastily as if to cut across Flecknoe's speech at this point After all, what usually stretches through love's kingdom is a penis; and Dryden curtails the word on its first syllable and rushes in an irrelevant rhyming line whose very clumsiness, like the bad ball / ale rhyme,

205 Summers, 253.

draws attention to the curtailed innuendo. Penis is not recorded in *OED* till 1694; but it was certainly known in unwritten usage or in its Latin form; and pen, anyway, is an obvious enough phallic image to assure us the concept is present here. But since neither Flecknoe nor Shadwell has a penis, the word is necessarily like their members cut short. A pen, indeed, is all either ever could stretch through love's kingdom.

Apart from happy obscenity, these lines do have a further point. Flecknoe expounds their relevance:

> Success let others teach, learn thou from me
> Pangs without birth, and fruitless Industry. (147–8)

Flecknoe and Shadwell are not masculine, but experience feminine birth-pangs. But not only do they not have 'virility', as women they are barren. They can experience only the parody of giving birth. They experience pangs, but bring forth no issue, no success (the word also meant a succession of heirs), their labours are fruitless.

But if Flecknoe and Shadwell are impotent, sterile, barren, what are those literary works whose titles Dryden mentions? Flecknoe and Shadwell are not totally without issue. Potent balls issue forth semen, potent ale issues forth urine. The organs of generation are the organs of excretion. Though they cannot procreate, Flecknoe and Shadwell produce volumes of excreta, and the appropriate imagery is established early on:

> Echoes from *Pissing-Ally*, *Sh–* call,
> And *Sh–* they resound from *A– Hall.* (47–8)

The context of the street name established the pun on *Sh—*, which is repeated later:

> From dusty shops neglected Authors come,
> Martyrs of Pies, and Reliques of the Bum.
> Much *Heywood*, *Shirly*, *Ogleby* there lay,
> But loads of *Sh–* almost choakt the way. (101–4)

The fate of poems for wiping arses, the 'loads' that 'almost choakt the way', and the fact that Shadwell's name alone of the writers is abbreviated, makes the pun inevitable – not only in

these lines but at every other mention of *Sh–*. Even in full his name, the 'd' so readily made a 't', will forever be wedded to the cloacal. The mystery of how such sexually ill-equipped, or mis-equipped, figures as Flecknoe and Shadwell could produce anything is solved: they produce not offspring-literature but excreta. The scatological substitution is not unique. The same urinatory and foecal imagery was used later by Henry Carey to describe Ambrose Philips' verses:

> To repeat to missy-miss,
> Piddling ponds of pissy-piss …
> Now he pumps his little wits;
> Sh…ing writes and writing sh…ts,
> All by little tiny bits.[206]

By the firmly established imagery (the 'Morning Toast', and 'Whip-stitch, kiss my Arse' sustain it) the scatological innuendo persists throughout the poem. It is the necessary, the only possible, development of the parodic procreative imagery. Shadwell, bad poetry and shit are forever, irrevocably, identified. His throne takes on a new meaning.

It might be argued that such innuendo is readily found by the seeker, though never intended. But when Addison, for instance, describes the God of dullness there is no sexual innuendo in the parody of the monarchical regalia:

> Upon my entrance I saw the Deity of that Place dressed in the Habit of a Monk, with a Book in one Hand and a Rattle in the other.[207]

The book and monk's habit might recall Flecknoe, but any innuendo is carefully excluded. Similarly, the poems made 'Martyrs of Pies, and Reliques of the Bum' find a parallel in *Spectator* 85 for the former fate ('I once met with a Page of *Baxter* under a *Christmas* Pye …') but not for the latter. Though parallels for the latter fate are common enough, and Shadwell's 'Letter … to Mr Wicherley' provides one. That Addison's parallels allude only to part of their analogues, and exclude sexual or scatological innuendo suggests that Dryden's

206 *The Poems of Henry Carey*, ed. Wood (London, 1930), 113.
207 *The Spectator*, ed. Bond (Oxford 1965),vol. 1, 271; No. 63.

innuendo had consciously and deliberately to be introduced: it cannot be read into any innocuous context.

Both literary allusion and obscene innuendo work together for *MacFlecknoe*'s climax. They are involved, too, with a train of allusion to the works of Flecknoe and Shadwell – the works that necessitate this ranging for referents from noble literature to scatology, the works responsible for this debasement here demonstrated in the language. Kinsley documents them in his edition, and we have already noted Shadwell's *Psyche* and Flecknoe's *Love's Kingdom.* The final allusion at the poem's climax is well known – the trapdoor is borrowed from Shadwell's *The Virtuoso* – the playwright hoist with his own petard. It is a finely appropriate ending, in terms both of the action and the pattern of allusion. The religious allusions in the poem are also brought to a culmination with the parodic echo here of Kings II. 9–13, when Elijah hands over his prophetic powers and mantle to Elisha. But whereas Elijah is suddenly taken up to heaven in a whirlwind, Flecknoe appropriately drops downwards, a parody of the divine, and imitation of the fallen angels. The climax of the religious references by blasphemous inversion, this 'fall' is also the climax of the *Paradise Lost* echoes: not though as mock-heroic, but as appropriate – Flecknoe having shared Satan's presumptuousness now shares Satan's fate – a fall into darkness. The Hell imagery from Cowley and Milton is now fulfilled. The 'subterranean wind' that bears the mantle upwards for his successor is the last of the verbal echoes from *Paradise Lost.* It is a blast from Hell, an allusion to the imagery of Hell:

> as when the force
> Of subterranean wind transports a hill
> Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side
> Of thundering *Æ*tna, whose combustible
> And fuelled entrails thence conceiving fire,
> Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
> And leave a singed bottom all involved
> With stench and smoke. (I. 230–7)

J. B. Broadbent has called the passage a 'cosmic defecation'[208] and a more explicit intestinal disturbance, confirming this reading of Milton's passage, can be seen in Richard Blackmore's *Prince Arthur*.[209]

> *Aetna*, *Vesuvius*, and the fiery kind,
> Their Flames within blown up with stormy Wind;
> With dire Concussions, and loud roar complain
> Of deadly Gripes, and fierce consuming pain.
> The lab'ring Mounts Belch drossy Vomit out,
> And throw their melted Bowels round about.

In the revised fourth edition even more clearly the mountains 'with their melted Bowels spread the Ground.'[210]The volcano is one of those images from epic tradition placed by Milton (like his oak trees) in the area of the false epic, the benighted and the destructive, the hostile to God. The only volcanoes in *Paradise Lost* are in Hell. But not only is the Hell imagery culminated here, the culminating defecation is also equally appropriate as a climax for Flecknoe's departure and Shadwell's enthronement. And both Milton and Blackmore associated their volcanic defecation with a grotesque perversion of birth imagery – 'conceiving' and 'lab'ring' – appropriate to the imagery of *MacFlecknoe.* The 'subterranean wind' is not merely a verbal cue directing us to the allusion. It does that, but adds its further meaning. It has its own function in carrying the mantle upwards instead of letting it sink away. The wind's origin and nature can be deduced from the Miltonic 'singed bottom all involv'd / With stench and smoke.' If we read the alliterative pattern of Dryden's final couplet correctly, it is easily identified:

> The Mantle fell to the young Prophet's part,
> With double portion of his Father's art. (216–17)

The proper alliteration to balance and rhyme with 'Prophet's part' is, of course, 'Father's fart': this is emphasized by the play within the couplet on initial alliteration – 'Fell … Prophet's part' (f, p, p), is neatly varied into 'portion … Father's fart' (p, f, f). The pattern,

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[208] J. B. Broadbent, *Some Graver Subject* (London, 1960), 83.
[209] 1695, 3, 67.
[210] (1714, 75)

and the antecedent imagery, and the literary allusion, combine to encourage our deduction. To have to deduce the fart rather than simply read it makes Dryden seem, just, allusively witty rather than directly vulgar. The fart, then, is Flecknoe's final utterance from the throne. It fulfils the anal imagery, and explains the otherwise mysterious 'subterranean wind' that lifts the mantle in defiance of gravity. Elisha said to Elijah, 'I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.' But the spirit, the inspiration, the prophetic gust of air that Flecknoe imparts, is appropriately like the prophetic spirit Marvell refers to when his two horses at the end of their 'Dialogue' 'Horribly farted' (168):

> If the Delphick Sybills oracular speeches,
> As learned men say, came out of their breeches,
> Why might not our Horses, since words are but wind,
> Have the spirit of Prophesy likewise behind? (171–4)[211]

No wonder that when Dryden turned to Shadwell again in the lines he wrote in *Absalom and Achitophel part II* he began, 'Now stop your noses Readers' (457): if a double portion of the father's art had been inherited, the advice would be necessary.

In the climax of the poem, then, the most heterogeneous and distant objects are brought into an involved and complementary unity. Direct statement is avoided – even the 'action' of the trapdoor is an allusion. The full force of the climax comes from the unsaid – from the references to the Bible and *Paradise Lost* that fill out the meaning, from innuendo to the vulgar and scatological. There is nothing of the poetry of statement here. And it must be emphasized that the allusions are allusions and nothing more: there is no allegory, no plot imported by them. Flecknoe and Shadwell are not to be seen as following through the action of *Paradise Lost* or the *Davideis* or the Bible. The allusions do not have that coherence of simple substitution, of one action re-enacting another. The allusions and the innuendo are much more lightly used than that, and the danger of this sort of analysis is that it implies the existence of some rigid scheme. But the great virtue of allusion and innuendo is that, more easily than statement, they can avoid the rigid or schematic in favour of the quick, glancing, elusive touch. The schemes that they do import are metaphoric, which they serve to establish and sustain. And what more appropriate metaphor for the sounds of the bad poet, what more

211 *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. H. M. Margoliouth (Oxford, 1952).

appropriate an image for the bardic, epic, poet-prophet pretensions of Flecknoe and Shadwell, what more conclusive a statement of their poetic abilities (though a statement only by innuendo), could there be than the poem's final note, ending not with a bang or a whimper, but a fart?

Dryden and Satire: *MacFlecknoe, Absalom and Achitophel, The Medall* and Juvenal

'The right of blaming bad Authors, is an ancient Right, pass'd into a custom, among all the Satirists, and allow'd in all ages,' wrote the French satirist Boileau in 1668.[212] But though following an ancient right, Dryden derived little from the ancient manner of classical satirists when he came to write his own onslaught on someone he assessed as a bad author in *MacFlecknoe*. Persius employs direct moral censure:

> First, to begin at Home, our Authors write
> In lonely Rooms, secur'd from publick sight;
> Whether in Prose or Verse, 'tis all the same:
> The Prose is Fustian, and the Numbers lame.
> All noise, and empty Pomp, a storm of words,
> Lab'ring with sound, that little Sense affords.
> They Comb, and then they order ev'ry Hair:
> A Gown, or White, or Scour'd to whiteness, wear:
> A Birth-day Jewel bobbing at their Ear.
> Next, gargle well their Throats; and thus prepar'd.
> They mount, a God's Name, to be seen and heard
> From their high Scaffold; with a Trumpet Cheek:
> And Ogling all their Audience e're they speak.
> The nauseous Nobles, ev'n the Chief of *Rome*,
> With gaping Mouths to these Rehearsals come,
> And pant with Pleasure, when some lusty line
> The Marrow pierces, and invades the Chine.
> At open fulsome Bawdry they rejoice;
> And slimy Jests applaud with broken Voice.
> Base Prostitute, thus dost thou gain thy Bread?

[212] Boileau, *A Discourse of Satire Arraigning Persons by Name*, 1730, appended to Walter Harte, *Essay on Satire* (London, 1730), (Augustan Reprint Society, 132) (Los Angeles, 1968).

Thus dost thou feed their Ears, and thus art fed?
At his own filthy stuff he grins, and brays:
And gives the sign where he expects their praise.
(Persius, I. 32–54, translated by John Dryden).

This direct diatribe, without irony, without comedy, is characteristic of classical verse satire. That we tend now to expect wit, humour, obliqueness, *double entendre* and subtlety in satire is a result very much of Dryden's achievement. Denunciatory satire existed in English in such writers as Joseph Hall and John Marston before Dryden. But with Dryden the nature of English satire was markedly changed.

Dryden's attack on bad writing operates utterly differently from that of Persius. He may well have felt the same anger as Persius did at the corruptions of literature, but he does not offer a personal condemnation of corruption. Instead, through the personality and mouth of Richard Flecknoe, he presents a panegyric on bad writing. The wit resides in our knowing that it is bad writing that is being praised, in seeing the discrepancy between the values asserted in the praise and the values adhering to the literature itself. That Flecknoe is shown as monarch of the 'Realms of *Non-sense*' establishes the value of his praise, makes it a cruel attack; but since what Flecknoe says about Thomas Shadwell is put into this positive context of praise rather than of the negative destruction of Persius' railing, the satire is given a geniality of tone. Flecknoe decides to resign his throne of the 'Realms of *Non-sense*'

And pond'ring which of all his Sons was fit
To Reign, and wage immortal War with Wit;
Cry'd, 'tis resolv'd; for Nature pleads that He
Should onely rule, who most resembles me:
Sh– alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullness from his tender years.
Sh– alone, of all my Sons, is he
Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But *Sh*– never deviates into sense.
(*MacFlecknoe*, 11–20)

What is said is as damning as anything from Persius – Shadwell's 'dullness' and 'stupidity' – but it is done with a smile. And along with the smile go the subtler, crueller attacks. Insofar as Shadwell thought of himself as heir to any writer, it was to Ben Jonson, whose comedies he admired, whose enthusiasm for beer he shared, and whose physical girth he rivalled. Jonson's poetic disciples were known as the 'sons of Ben', and Dryden retains this concept when Flecknoe considers 'all his Sons'; Shadwell is presented as a son of Flecknoe, a prolific writer of unsuccessful works, not as a son of Ben.

'MacFlecknoe' means, of course, 'son of Flecknoe' in Irish nomenclature. 'Such barb'rous *Mac's*' Dryden calls the Irish in one of his Prologues to the University of Oxford.[213] But the Irishness of the formula needs explanation. The Irishness is stressed; Flecknoe gives Shadwell a realm of watery emptiness, one of whose shores is Ireland: 'from *Ireland* let him reign / To farr *Barbadoes*' (139–40); and describing Shadwell's art he tells how

> Like mine thy gentle numbers feebly creep.
> Thy Tragick Muse gives smiles, thy Comick sleep.
> With whate'er gall thou sett'st thy self to write,
> Thy inoffensive Satyrs never bite.
> In thy felonious heart, though Venom lies,
> It does but touch thy *Irish* pen and dyes. (197–202)

The art of Shadwell and Flecknoe inverts the values it might be expected to aim for. The poetry comes out back to front – tragedy provokes smiles, satire causes no offence. Such inversion of values was allegedly the peculiar quality of Irish bards. 'There is amongst the Irishe a certen kinde of people called Bardes which are to them in steade of Poets whose profession is to sett fourthe the praises and dispraises of menne in their Poems or Rhymes,' Edmund Spenser wrote in *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1633).[214] It is as an Irish bard that Flecknoe is presented – 'the yet declaiming Bard' (213) he is called, the word 'bard' at this date having a specifically Irish primary association. Flecknoe's praise of Shadwell is

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[213] *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. James Kinsley, 4 volumes (Oxford, 1958), I. 374, line 27. All quotations from this edition.

[214] *Spenser's Prose Works*, ed. Rudolf Gottreid, in *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition* (Baltimore, 1949), 125. I am indebted to R. M. Cummings for this reference. The bards are well covered by Robert C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire* (Princeton, 1960).

an Irish bard's panegyric. The panegyrics of Irish bards were not like conventional panegyrics, Spenser explains:

> It is moste trewe that suche poetes as in theire wrightinges doe labour to better the manners of men and thorough the swete bayte of theire numbers to steale into the yonge spirites a desire of honour and virtue are worthie to be had in greate respecte. But these Irishe Bardes are for the moste parte of another minde and so farre from instructinge yonge men in morall discipline that they themselues doe more deserue to be sharpelye disciplined for they seldom vse to Chose out themselues the doings of good men for the argumentes of theire poems but whom soeuer they finde to be moste Licentious of life moste bolde and lawless in his doings moste daungerous and desperate in all partes of disobedience and rebellious disposicion him they set vp and glorifye in their Rymes him they praise to the people and to yonge men make an example to followe.

Irish bards praise the bad. By presenting Flecknoe in the prophetic robes of an Irish bard, the subject of his panegyric must inevitably be seen as 'moste licentious of life …' etc., as a figure of destruction, as an outlaw from the realms of true literature like the outlaws praised by the bards, as indeed the possessor of a 'fellonious heart'.

However, Dryden does not want to stress the seriousness of the threat that Shadwell poses to literature; that would be an acknowledgement of the stature of his rival. By treating him as a comic figure, Dryden can still attack him yet not seem to be worried. That Shadwell's tragic muse provokes smiles is evidence of the Irish bardic inversion of proper values, but it is also evidence of comic incompetence. It is a charge that Dryden makes with some effrontery since it had previously been levelled at him in the prologue to *The Rehearsal* (1672), the burlesque play by which the Duke of Buckingham and others attacked Dryden's dramatic techniques; 'Our Poets make us laugh at Tragoedy / And with their Comoedies they make us cry.'[215]

Shadwell of course missed the point of the Irish allusions. In the epistle dedicatory to his translation of *The Tenth Satyr of Juvenal* (1687) he complains that 'the Author of *Mac-Flecknoe* … goes a little too far in calling me the dullest, and has no more reason for that, than for giving me the *Irish* name of *Mack*, when he knows I never saw *Ireland* till I was

[215] In *Burlesque Plays of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Simon Trussler (London, 1969), 5.

three and twenty years old, and was there but four Months.'[216] But Shadwell was not alone in missing the point. Poor Flecknoe is referred to in every reference book from the *Dictionary of National Biography* to the *Oxford History of English Literature* as an Irish priest; a priest he seems to have been, but there is nothing to suggest that he was Irish, except for Dryden's joke.[217]

By the device of the Irish bard, Dryden can present something more complex than the simple railing of Persius. By setting the priestly-prophetic bard on a throne of bad literature, Dryden establishes a dramatic situation whose context allows a free run for the mock-heroic. The central episode of *MacFlecknoe* is Flecknoe's abdication from his throne and the coronation of Shadwell as his successor. For the monarchist Dryden a coronation was the central symbol of the establishment of social order. And the coronation of Shadwell draws on the dignified and heroic associations of coronations in Biblical, Classical and contemporary writing. But these dignified associations exist primarily so that the discrepancy between them and the new monarch of dullness, Shadwell, can be established. Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1662), one of the most popular poems of the Restoration, had exploited this discrepancy for burlesque effect in his account of a Civil War's would-be hero of epic and romance; but the Don Quixote-like adventures of Hudibras are described in burlesque verse as vulgar and comic as the hero it describes. And both are comically distant from the classical models that they are aware of and constantly remind us of. Attempting to disperse a bear-baiting, Hudibras and Ralpho end up in a brawl with some villagers that is a modern degenerate version of epic warfare. Hudibras engages Talgol, no Trojan knight but the local butcher, in single combat:

> This said, with hasty rage he snatch'd
> His Gun'shot, that in holsters watch'd;
> And bending Cock, he level'd full
> Against th'outside of *Talgol*'s Skull;
> Vowing that he shou'd ne're stir further,

[216] *The Works of Thomas Shadwell*, ed. Montague Summers, 5 volumes (London, 1927), vol. 5. 292.

[217] I am grateful to Mrs E. E. Duncan Jones for pointing out to me that there is no evidence for believing that Flecknoe was Irish: Andrew Marvell, who had met him, titled his poem about him 'an *English* priest at Rome'. No convincing argument as to why Dryden chose Flecknoe as his monarch of dullness has been given, but the suggestions include: Peter Cunningham, 'Dryden's Quarrel with Flecknoe', *Gentleman's Magazine*, NS 34 (1850), 597–9; John Harrington Smith, 'Dryden and Flecknoe: A Conjecture', *Philological Quarterly*, 1954, 338–41; and Maximilian E. Novak, 'Dryden's "Ape of the French Eloquence"', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 62, 1968, 499–506.

Nor henceforth Cow or Bullock murther,
But *Pallas* came in Shape of Rust,
And 'twixt the Spring and Hammer thrust
Her *Gorgon*-Shield, which made the Cock
Stand Stiff, as if 'twere turn'd t'a stock. (I. ii. 775–84)[218]

The epic penumbra to the ignoble event, and the classical allusions, all provide a precedent for Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*. But Dryden rejects Butler's burlesque octosyllabics for reasons he explains in his *Discourse Concerning Satire*: 'in any other Hand, the shortness of his Verse, and the quick returns of Rhyme, had debas'd the Dignity of Style.' To find mock-heroic handled with dignity of style Dryden turned to Boileau's *Lutrin*: 'He writes it in the *French* Heroique Verse, and calls it an Heroique Poem: His Subject is Trivial, but his Verse is Noble'.[219]

Butler, however, provided an English model for mock-heroic dignity in his 'To the Happy Memory of the most Renown'd Du-Val' (1671).[220] A Pindaric ode, metrically it is unlike Dryden's satire, but the elegance of language, the controlled vocabulary and movement of its opening, provide a noble tone:

'Tis true, to compliment the Dead
Is as impertinent and vain,
As 'twas of old to call them back again,
Or, like the *Tartars*, give them Wives
With settlements, for After-lives:
For all that can be done, or said,
Tho' ere so noble, great, and good,
By them is neither heard, nor understood.
All our fine Slights, and Tricks of Art.
First to create, and then adore Desert.

[218] Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, ed. John Wilders (Oxford, 1967), 51.
[219] Kinsley, ed., vol. 2. 663, 664. I have discussed Butler's manner further in 'The Last of the Epics: The Rejection of the Heroic in *Paradise Lost* and *Hudibras*', in *Restoration Literature: Critical Approaches,* ed. Harold Love (London, 1972), reprinted in Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1987).
[220] Samuel Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, ed. René Lamar (Cambridge, 1928), 97-103. See 'Highwaymen' in Christopher Hill, *Liberty Against the Law: Some Seventeenth-Century Controversies* (London, 1996), 129.

And those Romances, which we frame.
To raise ourselves, not them, a Name,
In vain are stuft with ranting Flatteries,
And such as, if they knew, they would despise. (1–14)

It is a beautiful opening for an elegiac poem, but its beauty is there for the ironic discrepancy with its subject Claud Du Val, a notorious highwayman who was hanged at Tyburn in 1669. It is with a similarly dignified, slow, elegiac note, a similarly heavy, sententious manner for a similarly unheroic sort of subject that Dryden opens *MacFlecknoe*:

All humane things are subject to decay,
And, when Fate summons, Monarchs must obey:
This *Flecknoe* found, who, like *Augustus*, young
Was call'd to Empire, and had govern'd long:
In Prose and Verse, was own'd, without dispute
Through all the Realms of non-sense, absolute. (1–6)

But though the mock-heroic tone of *MacFlecknoe* is similar to Butler's tone in 'Du-Val', Dryden does not, like Butler, create his satire through the ambiguity of a sustained suppression of his subject's nature. That Du-Val is a highwayman emerges not by statement but from ironic ambiguities:

He had improv'd his nat'ral Parts,
And with his magic Rod could sound
Where hidden Treasure might be found. (78–80)

Whereas Flecknoe and Shadwell are explicitly established as dull writers of nonsense by Dryden's sixth line. As Ian Jack points out, 'The ridicule is much more direct than that in *A Tale of a Tub*, or *Jonathan Wild the Great*. Qualities in fact ridiculous are nominally praised; but they are given their true names, 'dullness', 'nonsense', 'tautology'.'[221] By the device of the Irish bard Dryden can have the true nature of Shadwell explicitly stated, instead of

[221] Ian Jack, *Augustan Satire* (Oxford, 1952), 50.

established by irony and ambiguity, and he can praise this true nature instead of railing at it like Juvenal or Persius.

The elevation to an ideal of something explicitly stated as bad, and the rigorous commitment to such an ideal of badness, are classically portrayed in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). 'Evil be thou my Good,' Satan declares (IV.110); and that, as James Sutherland has remarked, is the sentiment upon which Flecknoe's opening speech is based.[222] His 'immortal War with Wit' (12) is a version of Satan's 'immortal hate' (I. 107). Dryden knew *Paradise Lost* in close detail, having turned it into an 'opera', *The State of Innocence* (1677). He alludes to it constantly in his poetry, finding in the rebellion of Satan the archetype of political rebellion in seventeenth-century England.[223] The Satanic rebellion serves as a touchstone in his satires, providing a metaphoric hinterland to illuminate Shaftesbury and his associates in *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medall*. Shadwell and Flecknoe are rebels in the realm of literature, placed by allusion to the Satanic materials of *Paradise Lost*.

Milton's portrayal of Satan has its own satiric dimension. Satan attempts to equal God but achieves only parody; the devils stand in semi-circles in Hell whereas the angels stand in perfect circles in Heaven; Hell's gates open to a fearful sound, Heaven's to harmony; Satan's journey to earth to destroy mankind by introducing Death is a parodic prefiguring of Christ's journey to earth to save man by giving his own life; the trinity of Satan, Sin and Death is a grotesque parody of the Heavenly trinity. The wit of Dryden's allusions to *Paradise Lost* depends on our recognition of Milton's original parody scheme, for Dryden brilliantly exploits these different levels. When, for instance, Flecknoe states '*Sh*– alone my perfect image bears', the blasphemous implications of Flecknoe's reference to his adopted poetic son Shadwell in terms normally applied to God's relationship to His Son readily enough establish Flecknoe's self-aggrandizing delusions and, in spite of his being a priest, his lack of decorum. His moral and literary failings are exposed. But in fact in *Paradise Lost* the Son is described by the phrase 'the radiant image of his glory' (III. 63); Adam and Eve are not the subjects of the phrase either – 'in their looks divine / The image of their glorious maker shone' (IV. 291–2). The phrase 'perfect image' does indeed come from *Paradise Lost*, but it comes from Sin's description of how Satan fell incestuously in love with her, his daughter: 'Thy self in me thy perfect image viewing / Becamest enamoured' (II. 764–5). The blasphemous presumptions of

[222] James Sutherland, *English Satire* (London, 1958), 56.

[223] Ronald Paulson, *The Fictions of Satire* (Baltimore, 1967), 110–20, argues for the importance of *Paradise Lost* as a model of satiric possibilities. On Shaftesbury as Lucifer in *The Medall*, see Alan Roper, *Dryden's Poetic Kingdoms* (London, 1965), 87–103. John Carey and Alastair Fowler, ed., *The Poems of John Milton* (London, 1968). All quotations from the poems from this edition.

Flecknoe are properly there; but for the reader who locates the specific source of Dryden's allusion, there is a further dimension – the further joke that Flecknoe's phrase expresses his kinship to Satan, not to God. Attempting to emulate divinity, he achieves only a parody of a parody of divinity. It is a two-level response that Dryden evokes. We need to recognize not only the phrase quoted, but also the expected phrases not quoted – for '*radiant* image' and 'image … *shone*' contain the essential quality missing from the Satanic version – light, brightness. The imagery of *MacFlecknoe* is of fogs and glooms to express the dullness of its subjects; and part of the game Dryden plays is that of incorporating allusions to and phrases from noble literature, but always excluding any images of light that might originally have been contained, either excising them or substituting images of dullness. When Flecknoe is shown 'High on a Throne of his own Labours rear'd' (107) the allusion is to Satan's throne in *Paradise Lost*: 'High on a throne of a royal state which far / Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind' (II. 1–2). The throne is itself an attempted physical imitation of the spiritual glory of God's throne in 'the pure empyrean' (III. 57). Satan attempts to imitate that realm of pure fire by studding his throne with jewels; but Flecknoe's throne does not even have a tawdry brightness; the light is replaced by the dullness of 'his own Labours', his benighted literary works.

MacFlecknoe is packed with this sort of allusion to literary works and to the Bible; we shall see further examples when we turn to the poem's climax.[224] What is remarkable about Dryden's allusions is their minutely specific nature, contrasting with the more general echoes of heroic contexts from heroic literature that Butler used in *Hudibras*. That mock-heroic use of the noble as a touchstone to illuminate the degradation of the satire's subjects is present in *MacFlecknoe*, but with the additional rewards of specific jokes. Because of the religious implications of coronation and because of Flecknoe's being a priest, the religious imagery has its function; but the especial relevance of Flecknoe's blasphemous presumptions of a divine role arises from a play on the idea of God as 'creator', just as the allusions to Aeneas have a force additional to the simple provision of a heroic context for the enthronement, through a play on the word 'author', the categorization of Aeneas in those lines of Virgil's *Aeneid* alluded to in lines 106–9 of *MacFlecknoe*.

Then issu'd from the Camp, in Arms Divine,

[224] A. L. Korn, '*MacFlecknoe* and Cowley's *Davideis*', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 25, 1951, 99–127, and 'Allusion and Innuendo in Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*,' *supra*.

Æneas, Author of the Roman Line:
And by his side *Ascanius* took his Place,
The second Hope of *Rome*'s Immortal Race.
(*Aeneid,* translated by Dryden, XII. 251–4).

Flecknoe and Shadwell are not, however, in Dryden's view authors, creators, at all, but rather rebels in or outlaws from the realm of literature, destroyers. They may think they are creators, but the Satanic allusions establish their true nature. 'For only in destroying I find ease,' Satan declared in *Paradise Lost* (IX. 129).

This sort of specificity of allusion is not typical of Dryden's political satires. That famous Miltonic line describing Achitophel's renewed assault of temptation on Absalom, 'Him staggering so when Hells dire Agent found' (373) imitates the general Miltonic manner but is not a specific echo or parody. The reader who had merely glanced at Milton's work would recognize the 'Miltonics' and register the idea of devilish temptation. And that is all that is essential: *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medall* were political satires aimed at a wide readership. *MacFlecknoe,* however, was designed for a different audience. Dryden published it in 1684 only after a pirated version had appeared in 1682.[225]

It seems likely that the poem was never intended for publication and a general readership, but was written as part of a private literary feud. It is full of close literary allusions and jokes because the readership would have been primarily a literary one. It is a very in-group satire, depending on a knowledge of literary works in such detail of a kind that only someone with a professional concern with literature – writer, critic, bookseller, patron – would be likely to have. The utter literariness of the satire with practically every line and episode an allusion to some other literary work is appropriate for it subject and milieu; the full meanings are revealed only to those who have a shared experience of reading and play-going with Dryden.

In particular *MacFlecknoe* is filled with allusion to Shadwell's own writings, and the discrepancy between allusions to Virgil's Ascanius and Shadwell's Prince Nicander (179) for instance, creates those disjunctions that are the basis of comedy and satire; if, of course, the reader agrees with Dryden that Shadwell's work is so bad.

[225] Harold Brooks, 'When did Dryden write *MacFlecknoe*?', *Review of English Studies*, 11, 1935, 74–8; G. Thorn-Drury, 'Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*: A Vindication', *Modern Language Review*,13,1918, 276–81; George McFadden, 'Elkanah Settle and the Genesis of *MacFlecknoe*', *Philological Quarterly*, 43,1964, 55–72.

For fourteen years before *MacFlecknoe* was published, Dryden and Shadwell had been sniping at each other in the prefaces, prologues and epilogues to their plays. Their professional rivalry expressed itself especially in a debate about the nature of wit and comedy, the precedent of Ben Jonson's comedy, and the use of rhyme in drama.[226] Shadwell, to judge from his prefaces, must have been both remarkably naive and remarkably self-assured. He confesses to weaknesses and utterly exposes himself, yet clearly was too confident and too lazy to feel impelled to correct them. In the Preface to *Psyche*, his first verse play, he attacks other verse dramatists, Dryden foremost among them, implies that verse drama is not worth writing, admits the inadequacies of his own work, and yet at the same time manages to congratulate himself on certain of its features:

> In a good natur'd Countrey, I doubt not but this my first Essay in Rhime would be at least forgiven; especially when I promise to offend no more in this kind: But I am sensible, that here I must encounter a great many Difficulties. In the first place (though I expect more Candor from the best Writers in Rhime) the more moderate of them (who have yet a numerous Party, good judges being very scarce) are very much offended with me, for leaving my own Province of *Comedy*, to invade their Dominion of *Rhime*: But methinks they might be satisfied, since I have made but a small incursion, and am resolv'd to retire. And were I never so powerful, they should escape me, as the Northern People did the *Romans*, their craggy barren Territories, being not worth conqu'ring …
>
> In a thing written in five weeks, as this was, there must needs be many Errors, which I desire true Criticks to pass by; and which perhaps I see my self, but having much bus'ness, and indulging my self with some pleasure too, I have not had the leisure to mend them, nor would it indeed be worth the pains, since there are so many splendid Objects in the Play, and such variety of Diversions, as will not give the Audience leave to mind the Writing; and I doubt not but the Candid Reader will forgive the faults, when he considers, that the great Design was to entertain the Town with variety of Musick, curious Dancing, splendid Scenes and Machines; And that I do not, nor ever did, intend to value myself upon the writing of this Play.
>
> (Summers, ed., II. 279).

[226] D. M. McKeithan, 'The Occasion of *MacFlecknoe*', *PMLA*, 47, 1932, 766–71; R. Jack Smith, 'Shadwell's Impact on John Dryden', *Review of English Literature*, 20, 1944, 29–44; Michael W. Allsid, 'Shadwell's *MacFlecknoe*', *Studies in English Literature*, 7, 1967, 387–402.

Shadwell's flippant, casual attitude to playwriting provided Dryden with sufficient reason for launching his satire. And the territorial terms in which Shadwell couched his preface – 'Province', 'Dominion' – appear in the satire as indications of Shadwell's fatuous presumptuousness. 'Of his Dominion may no end be known' Flecknoe intones (141), providing an even emptier 'Dominion' stretching from Ireland to the Barbadoes than the 'craggy barren Territories' of the 'Dominion of *Rhime*'. The monarchical presumptions which lead to Shadwell's acceptance of coronation are implied in his own language.

In the verse prologue to his *Psyche* Shadwell establishes another range of imagery for himself which Dryden exploits:

> As a young wanton when she first begins,
> With shame, and with regret of Conscience sins;
> So fares our trembling Poet the first time,
> He has committed the lewd sin of Rhime,
> While Custom hardens others in the Crime.
> (Summers, ed., II. 281).

Shadwell may have intended 'the lewd sin of Rhime' to reflect on Dryden and his verse plays; but Dryden turns the images back on him and sets up Shadwell's throne in a training ground for young wantons – the actors' training school on the site of the old Barbican watchtower. 'From its old Ruins Brothel-houses rise, / Scenes of lewd loves, and of polluted joys' (70–1). The lines are an adaptation of Abraham Cowley's description of Hell in the *Davideis* and degrade the divine epic by applying its lines to prostitution: but such is the literary degradation that Flecknoe and Shadwell practice. They may presume to monarchy but their throne is in the brothel area; Flecknoe is indeed 'the *hoary* Prince' (106).

Prostitution is an appropriate image for the debasement of literary skills. Dryden was often enough accused of it himself. *The Tory Poet* which Shadwell may have written says of Dryden 'His Muse was prostitute upon the Stage, / And's *Wife* was Prostitute to all the age …' (Summers, ed., V.279). In *MacFlecknoe* Dryden develops the implications of the image; if Shadwell thought of himself as 'a young wanton' what did that mean? Not just the usual analogy, of simply selling his pen for hire. Dryden takes as the central aspect of prostitution here the idea of sex without procreation, the avoidance of conception and birth. Once again

Shadwell himself provides the imagery. At the end of the Preface to *Psyche* a Postscript notes that two of the songs had been previously published, including 'about eight lines in the first Act, beginning at this line, '*Tis frail as an abortive Birth*' (Summers, ed., II.280). The singling out of such a line may well have provoked Dryden's mirth. The image recurs in the epilogue to Shadwell's *The Virtuoso* (1676) where, apologizing again, Shadwell concludes:

> You know the pangs and many labouring throws
> By which your brains their perfect births disclose.
> You can the faults and excellencies find;
> Pass by the one, and be to th'other kind.
> By you he is resolv'd to stand or fall;
> What'er's his doom he'll not repine at all.
> An if his birth should wants its perfect shape
> And cannot by your care its death escape,
> Th'abortive issue came before its day
> And th'poet has miscarried of a play.[227]

Dryden develops these images of unfruitful pregnancies and uses Shadwell's own ideas, words and images to reveal the uncreativeness of his art. He readily interprets Shadwell's fatness as pregnancy – 'big with Hymn' (41) – and has Flecknoe declare, 'learn thou from me / Pangs without birth, and fruitless industry' (147–8). When we see Shadwell enthroned it is appropriate that his regalia should symbolize his unfruitfulness, non-creativeness:

> In his sinister hand, instead of Ball
> He plac'd a mighty Mug of potent Ale;
> *Love's Kingdom* to his right he did convey,
> At once his Sceptre and his rule of Sway;
> Whose righteous Lore the Prince had practis'd young
> And from whose Loyns recorded *Psyche* sprung. (120–5)

The particular association of drinking with the dulling of a playwright's wits is made by Flecknoe himself in his *A Short Discourse of the English Stage*, printed with *Love's Kingdom*

[227] *The Virtuoso*, ed. Marjorie Hope Nicholson and David Stuart Rodes (London, 1966), 141–2.

in 1664. 'A Dramatick Poet,' Flecknoe wrote, was 'to be a wise as well as a witty Man, and a good man, as well as a good Poet; and I'de allow him to be so far a good fellow too, to take a cheerful cup to whet his wits, so he take not so much to dull'um and whet'um quite away.' The prophetic father indeed. But as well as using the monarchical regalia of Shadwell's imperial presumptions to express his habitual drinking, Dryden exploits it for sexual innuendo. 'Instead of Ball' the monarch holds 'potent Ale'; calling the orb a ball emphasizes the idea of a testicle, to make the point that these monarchs are ball-less; whereas potent balls beget, procreate, potent ale produces no offspring, only sleep. And instead of a sceptre the monarch holds Flecknoe's play *Love's Kingdom*, whose title readily implies a sexual meaning; but whereas the sceptre is an image of a penis, the penis is usually love's king; *Love's Kingdom* is the vagina – 'O my America! My new-found-land' as John Donne put it. For these monarchs of dullness Dryden has introduced the monarchical regalia of orb and sceptre, and then superimposed a grotesque parody of these trappings – testicle and penis; and then he shows these monarchs not even maintaining the parody but enthroned within a parody of a parody – holding a mug of ale and one of Flecknoe's works. The reference to Shadwell's pregnancy makes more consistent sense when we find he has the sexual characteristics of a woman. He is of the same sex as his 'young wanton' and as Milton's Sin. This, then, is the final sexual insult, the attack on Shadwell's virility (and by implication on Flecknoe who as a priest was sworn to celibacy). No wonder Shadwell replied in *The Medal of John Bayes* to Dryden: 'An old gelt Mastiff has more mirth than thou' (Summers ed., V. 253).

Shadwell's literary impotence is expressed in part by giving him the sexual characteristics of a woman. But though his girth suggests pregnancy, he is doomed to 'Pangs without birth, and fruitless Industry'. But if he and Flecknoe are impotent, sterile, barren and aborting, what are those literary works of theirs whose titles Dryden mentions? 'Love has pitched his mansion in / The place of excrement': the appropriate imagery is established early when 'Echoes from *Pissing-Alley*, Sh– call' (470) and the context of the street name establishes the possibilities of the scatological substitution of shit for Sh– which is exploited later:

> From dusty shops neglected Authors come,
> Martyrs of Pies, and Reliques of the Bum.
> Much *Heywod*, *Shirly*, *Ogleby* there lay,

But loads of *Sh*– almost choakt the way. (100–3)

The fate of poems for wrapping pies and wiping arses, the 'loads' that 'almost choakt the way' and the fact that Shadwell's name alone of the writers mentioned is abbreviated makes the association inevitable, not only in these lines but at every other mention of Sh–. Flecknoe's 'Business' (i.e., both sexual intercourse and defecation) and the throne of his own labours take on new meanings.

The combination of literary allusion and obscene innuendo give *MacFlecknoe* its characteristic tone. It is not simply the co-existence of noble literature and scatology that create the surprise of wit, but the peculiarly erudite and pedantic minutiae from which the allusions get their effect, allied with the broad strokes of vulgarity; and the more indirect obscenities that are introduced with the subtlety and sophisticated suggestiveness applied to literary allusions. The full effectiveness of both the literary allusions and the obscenity depends on the existence of the other. The merely obscene would have limited *MacFlecknoe* to the sort of lampoon often directed against Dryden – *The Tory Poet*, or the *Satire to his Muse*; there would have been little humour other than that issuing from calling somebody a rude name. Shadwell in his 'Epistle to the Tories' prefacing *The Medal of John Bayes* attacks Dryden in the most offensive and personal way, totally without subtlety or wit: 'His prostituted *Muse* will become as common for hire, as his Mistress *Revesia* was, upon whom he spent to many hundred pounds; and of whom (to shew his constancy in Love) he got three Claps, and she was a Bawd.' And he concludes the poem

Pied thing! Half Wit! Half Fool! And for a Knave
Few Men, than this, a better mixture have:
But thou canst add to that, Coward and Slave.
(Summers, ed., V. 248, 262)

Dryden avoids the simple abuse of simply calling someone a rude name by handling rudeness with subtlety, by implying rather than merely stating. But the obscenity is strongly present. Had the literary allusion alone provided his material the effect of the poem would have been reduced to relatively ineffectual literary fun.

Literary allusion and vulgar innuendo are inseparably involved in the poem's climax. The very event that concludes the poem is a literary allusion. In Shadwell's play *The Virtuoso*

the two 'Gentlemen of wit and sense', Bruce and Longvil, let down the long-winded orator Sir Formal (with whose style Flecknoe blessed Shadwell in line 68) through a trapdoor (III. iv. 126). It is a rather broad comic trick, and Shadwell repeats it on Sir Samuel Hearty later (III. iv. 201). And in *Psyche*, too, Shadwell has the envious sisters sink below stage at the end of act IV: 'Arise ye Furies, snatch 'em down to Hell' (Summers, ed., II. 327) – one of the 'splendid Scenes and Machines' that Shadwell proudly commented on in his Preface. The repetition of this not especially subtle theatrical trick ensures its place in *MacFlecknoe*. But though we might have expected Shadwell to fall victim to his own bad art, the engineer hoist with his own petard, Dryden avoids that obviousness and, more sadly, makes Flecknoe, who has such pride in his poetic son's skills, the victim.

The incident is the culmination of the allusions to Shadwell's plays. The religious allusions in the poem[228] are brought to a simultaneous culmination with the parodic echo of Kings II. 9–13, where Elijah hands over his prophetic power and mantle to Elisha. Cowley had already made commendatory use of the episode in his poem 'On the Death of Mr Crashaw' (1656), providing a precedent for its use in literary panegyric:

> Thou from low earth in nobler Flames didst rise,
> And like Elijah, mount Alive the skies,
> Elisha-like (but with a wish much less,
> More fit thy Greatness, and my Littleness)
> Lo here I beg (I whom thou once didst prove
> So humble to Esteem, so Good to Love)
> Not that thy Spirit might on me Doubled be,
> I ask but Half thy mighty Spirit for Me.

But whereas Elisha – and Crashaw – soared up to heaven in a whirlwind, Flecknoe sinks downwards, in parody of the ascent of the divine prophet and the noble religious poet, in imitation of the fallen angels, going Hell-ward like Psyche's sisters. The Hell imagery from *Paradise Lost* and the *Davideis* is now fulfilled: having shared Satan's presumptuousness, Flecknoe now shares his fate. That it is the darkness of Hell that he falls into is confirmed by

[228] Baird W. Whitelock, 'Elijah and Elisha in Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*', *Modern Language Notes*, 70, 1955, 19–20; J. E. Tanner, 'The Messianic Image in *MacFlecknoe*', *Modern Language Notes*, 76, 1961, 220–3.

the ‘subterranean wind’ – the last of the echoes from *Paradise Lost*. Its source is the imagery of Hell:

> as when the force
> Of subterranean wind transports a hill
> Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side
> Of thundering Ætna, whose combustible
> And fuelled entrails thence conceiving fire,
> Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
> And leave a singed bottom all involved
> With stench and smoke. (I. 230–7)

This ‘cosmic defecation’, as J. B. Broadbent has described it,[229] relates to the imagery of *MacFlecknoe*; the imagery of pregnancy – ‘conceiving’ – develops into that of defecation. And the ‘subterranean wind’ has a precise, functional role in the poem, carrying the poet-priest’s mantle upwards in defiance of gravity rather than letting it sink with him. The Miltonic original defines that wind’s nature and origin, issuing from ‘a singed bottom all involved / With stench and smoke’. If we read the alliterative pattern of Dryden’s final couplet correctly it is easily identified:

> The Mantle fell to the young Prophet’s part,
> With double portion of his Father’s Art. (216–17)

The proper alliteration to balance and rhyme with ‘Prophet’s part’ is, of course, ‘Father’s fart’; the alliterative play within the couplet emphasizes this. ‘Fell … Prophet’s part’ is neatly varied into ‘portion … Father’s fart.’ The fart, then, is Father Flecknoe’s final poetic utterance from the throne. Elisha said to Elijah, ‘I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.’ But the spirit, the prophetic gust of air that Flecknoe imparts is a poetic utterance in keeping with the nature of Flecknoe’s and Shadwell’s verse that the anal and excretory imagery has established. No wonder when Dryden returned to Shadwell in *Absalom and Achitophel part II* he began, ‘Now stop your noses Readers …’ (457).

[229] J. B. Broadbent, *Some Graver Subject* (London, 1960), 83.

When *MacFlecknoe* was first printed in a pirated edition in 1682 it had as a subtitle 'A Satyr upon the True-Blew Protestant Poet, *T. S.* By the Author of *Absalom & Achitophel*'. This was dropped in the authorized 1684 printing, and is generally taken as the pirate printer's addition. Presumably the printer had hoped to capitalize on the success of *Absalom and Achitophel* by presenting *MacFlecknoe* as a political satire. But though Dryden later attacked Shadwell for being one of the Whig propagandists in the lines he contributed to Nahum Tate's continuation of *Absalom and Achitophel*, *MacFlecknoe* is not political in its concerns. Its basic image, nonetheless, reveals Dryden's political habits of thought. The concept of the monarchy of wit countered by a rebel monarchy of dullness and nonsense indicates Dryden's hierarchical and authoritarian assumptions operating in the realm of literature as well as in the realm of England.[230]

Absalom and Achitophel was intended to influence public opinion against Shaftesbury, who was about to be brought before the grand jury on a charge of high treason. However, the London grand jury rejected the bill of indictment. The Whigs rejoiced, and struck a commemorative medal. King Charles II is supposed to have suggested to Dryden the plan of a poem in response – though what plan *The Medall* has is hard to discern.[231] The medal had a bust of Shaftesbury on the obverse, and on the reverse a view of London Bridge with the sun rising above the Tower of London (where Shaftesbury had been imprisoned for over four months) dispersing a cloud. To some extent the design of Dryden's poem can be seen as imitating that of the medal, dealing with Shaftesbury in its first half and about midway (line 167) turning to deal with London. A. E Wallace Maurer has argued for a more schematic medallic structure: 'after the introduction in lines 1–21, the obverse takes shape in lines 22–144, and the reverse in lines 145–324.'[232] But the problem of deciding exactly where the poem moves from obverse to reverse (lines 145 or 166), and of whether lines 145–66 offer an introduction to the reverse comparable to but a line longer than the opening introduction, render unconvincing any arguments for a precise or symmetrical structure. The

[230] On the authoritarian patterns of imagery, see Hoffman; also Bernard N. Schilling, *Dryden and the Conservative Myth* (New Haven and London, 1961). Attempts to see specific political concerns in *MacFlecknoe* can be found in Samuel Holt Monk, 'Shadwell's "Flail of Sense"', *Notes and Queries*, new series 7, 1960, 67–8; Michael W, Allsid, 'Shadwell's *MacFlecknoe*', *Studies in English Literature*, 7, 1967, 387–402. Line 65 of *MacFlecknoe* is sometimes taken to refer to the Popish Plot.

[231] Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. James M. Osborn, 2 volumes (Oxford, 1966), 1, 28.

[232] A. E. Wallace Maurer, 'The Design of Dryden's *The Medall*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 2, 1966, 296; Samuel A. Golden, 'A Numismatic View of Dryden's "The Medall"', *Notes and Queries*, new series 9, 1962, 383–4. As I observe later, Alan Roper, 87–103, argues unconvincingly in my view for the poem's unity by virtue of its 'divine analogy' and forensic ordering.

poem depends more for its effect on the rough vigour of its manner than on any strictly defined shape.

Perhaps Charles suggested the virulent and vindictive tone of the poem. Morally it is no worse than *Absalom and Achitophel*, which was intended to influence the jury. Dryden's political satires were political instruments. Whatever literary qualities we may admire in them, we need to remember their manipulative, political intent, their McCarthyite-like smearing. *Absalom and Achitophel*, however, has some wit and subtlety:

> How easie it is to call Rogue and Villain, and that wittily! But how hard to make a Man appear a Fool, a Blockhead, or a Knave, without using any of those opprobrious terms! To spare the grossness of the Names, and to do the thing yet more severely, is to draw a full Face, and to make the Nose and Cheeks stand out, and yet not to employ any depth of shadowing.

So Dryden wrote later in his *Discourse concerning Satire*, and cited his portrait of Buckingham:

> The Character of Zimri in my *Absalom*, is, in my Opinion, worth the whole Poem: 'Tis not bloody, but 'tis ridiculous enough. And he for whom it was intended, was too witty to resent it as an injury. If I had rail'd, I might have suffer'd for it justly: But I manag'd my own Work more happily, perhaps more dextrously. (Kinsley, ed., II. 655)

But there is little witty geniality in *The Medall*. The scatological imagery of *MacFlecknoe* operates as a joke: but the image of Shaftesbury infecting the nation with syphilis in *The Medall* is devoid of comedy:

> Religion thou hast none: thy *Mercury*
> Has pass'd through every Sect, or theirs through Thee.
> But what thou giv'st, that Venom still remains;
> And the pox'd Nation feels Thee in their Brains.
> What else inspires the Tongues, and swells the Breasts
> Of all thy bellowing Renegado Priests,
> That preach up Thee for God: dispence thy Laws;

And with thy Stumm ferment their fainting Cause?
Fresh Fumes of Madness raise; and toile and sweat
To make the formidable Cripple great.
(*The Medall*, 263–72)

The disease images that recur through *The Medall* – the 'fester'd Sore' of the jurors (151), 'the swelling Poyson of the sev'ral Sects' (294) – are designed to nauseate, not amuse. And though the imagery is a metaphor of what Dryden sees as the disease of sedition infecting the nation, the specific associations of the disease are meant to reflect personally on Shaftesbury, implying that he is syphilitic; just as the earlier passage of his breaking with the Commonwealth uses sexual imagery that works both metaphorically and personally:

But, as 'tis hard to cheat a Juggler's Eyes,
His open lewdness he cou'd ne'er disguise.
There split the Saint: for Hypocritique Zeal
Allows no Sins but those it can conceal.
Whoring to Scandal gives too large a scope:
Saints must not trade; but they may interlope. (36–41)

K. H. D. Haley has considered the assertions concerning Shaftesbury's sexual adventures in his biography but has found no support for them.[233] They seem to have been the product of Tory propagandists who attempted to discredit Shaftesbury in the 1680s and after; none of the stories dates from before Shaftesbury's sixtieth year. Dryden had made no attack on Shaftesbury's sexuality in *Absalom and Achitophel*; his sudden assertion in *The Medall* that 'His open lewdness he cou'd ne'er disguise' (37) is a newly discovered weapon. He uses it skilfully, and the personal applications of the sexual metaphors give the satire its unadmirable power. The emphasis on Shaftesbury as 'Cripple' (272), 'Pigmee' (27), the dwelling on his high-pitched voice, his being a eunuch – 'the lowdest Bagpipe of the squeaking Train' (35) – all these have a virulence that the insults of *MacFlecknoe* avoided:

Oh, cou'd the Style that copy'd every grace,
And plough'd such furrows for an Eunuch face,

[233] K. H. D. Haley, *The First Earl of Shaftesbury* (Oxford, 1968), 211–15.

Cou'd it have form'd his ever-changing Will,
The various Piece had tir'd the Graver's Skill!
A Martial Heroe first, with early care,
Blown, like a Pigmee by the Winds, to war,
A beardless Chief, a Rebel, e'er a Man:
(So young his hatred to his Prince began.)
Next this, (How wildly will Ambition steer!)
A Vermin, wriggling in th' Usurper's Ear. (22–31)

The emphases are personal and derogatory, whereas when Dryden used the pigmy image in *Absalom and Achitophel* it was not merely an easy jibe at Shaftesbury's smallness of stature, but, allied with the generalizing phrase 'Tenement of Clay', a comment on all mankind, on the propensity of the human mind to drive the body mercilessly, on the restless ambition of man, on the hunger of the imagination:

A fiery Soul, which working out its way,
Fretted the Pigmy Body to decay:
And o'r inform'd the Tenement of Clay …
Great Wits are sure to Madness near ally'd;
And thin Partitions do their Bounds divide:
Else, why should he, with Wealth and Honour blest,
Refuse his Age the needful hours of Rest?
Punish a Body which he could not please;
Bankrupt of Life, yet Prodigal of Ease?
(*Absalom and Achitophel*, 156–8, 163–8)

For all the dislike of Shaftesbury in *Absalom and Achitophel* – and the dislike and destructiveness in the portrait should not be minimized – there was an understanding of the psychological type of person to which he belonged. But *The Medall* does not have this abstracting, this conceptualizing treatment of Shaftesbury; it depends on specific, abusive attack. There is never any sense of Shaftesbury as a type or as a character – nothing comparable with the character of Shadwell in *MacFlecknoe*, nothing of the types of Zimri or Achitophel in *Absalom and Achitophel* or of the portraits of Settle and Shadwell written for

Nahum Tate's continuation. Insofar as there is any character analysis of Shaftesbury other than abuse it is contradictory. Dryden is torn between wanting to stress Shaftesbury's utter fickleness, changeableness, and consequent treacherous unreliability, and at the same time wanting to stress an unchangeable consistency of corruption. If changeable, then Shaftesbury would sometimes be on the side of the 'good' – and Dryden added some lines in the second edition of *Absalom and Achitophel* praising his probity as a judge, though H. T. Swedenberg has raised the possibility of their being ironic.[234] But by the time of *The Medall* Dryden no longer made such concessions: 'Ev'n in the most sincere advice he gave / He had a grudging still to be a Knave' (57–8). The sincere advice Shaftesbury gives because of his changeableness cannot be admitted to be unadulteratedly sincere. Dryden balances on his contradiction skilfully, and Dr Johnson wrote admiringly of lines 50–62 of *The Medall*: 'The picture of a man whose propensions to mischief are such that his best actions are but inability of wickedness, is very skilfully delineated and strongly colored.'[235]

Although various images and metaphors – such as those of disease and of Satanic rebellion – recur through *The Medall*, attempts to see them as creating structurally unifying patterns, rather than as *ad hoc* touchstones and illustrations, are unpersuasive.[236] The images provide momentary vigour, but the satire is too urgent to allow the leisurely, cumulative development of organizing metaphors. The literary convention which determines the manner of *The Medall* is one of avoiding obvious literary conventions. Sustained literary allusion or developed metaphoric analogies would smack distractingly of the library in the serious struggle of matters of life and death in which Dryden was taking sides. Nor does *The Medall* work primarily by the establishment of character, or by the narrative of some central event. Dryden, in his *Discourse concerning Satire* (Kinsley, ed., I. 637) classed both *MacFlecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel* as Varronian satires: satires organized round a particular narrative and employing comedy. But with *The Medall* events are too pressing to allow the detachment of comedy or character creation. *The Medall* is closer to Juvenalian satire: it depends on the vigour of its denunciation and draws a stream of examples and arguments to attack the topic of sedition in Shaftesbury and his supporters in the city of London. Dr Johnson noted the limited appeal of the poem:

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[234] H. T. Swedenberg, 'Challenges to Dryden's Editor', *John Dryden, Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar* (Los Angeles, 1967). They are the only known references to Shaftesbury's probity as a judge.
[235] Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G. B. Hill, 3 volumes (Oxford, 1905), 1, 438.
[236] See for instance Roper, 87–103.

> *The Medall*, written upon the same principles with *Absalom and Achitophel*, but upon a narrower plan, gives less pleasure, though it discovers equal abilities in the writer. The superstructure cannot extend beyond the foundation; a single character and incident cannot furnish as many ideas as a series of events of multiplicity of agents. This poem therefore, since time has left it to itself, is not much read, nor perhaps generally understood, yet it abounds with touches both of humorous and serious satire.[237]

Dryden's sheer verbal skill, nonetheless, gives his diatribes tremendous vigour. His great suspicion of the crowd, his fear of the uncontrolled power of the people,[238] provokes him to some of his finest alliterative invective, achieving a marvellous consonantal contempt. The evil of Shaftesbury is that

> He preaches to the Crowd, the Pow'r is lent,
> But not convey'd to Kingly Government:
> That Claimes successive bear no binding force;
> That Coronation Oaths are things of course;
> Maintains the Multitude can never err,
> And sets the People in the Papal Chair.
>
> (*The Medall*, 82–7)

The verbal play on People / Papal produces its devastating political message. And the idea of the elevation of the crowd to infallibility produces some of Dryden's most biting wit, in which the parodic skills of *MacFlecknoe* are allied in the apostrophe with a moving indictment of the crowd's fickleness:

> Almighty Crowd, thou shorten'st all dispute;
> Pow'r is thy Essence; Wit thy attribute!
> Nor Faith nor Reason makes thee at a stay,
> Thou leapst o'r all eternal truths, in thy *Pindarique* way!

[237] Johnson, Lives, ed. G. B. Hill, 1, 437–8.

[238] There is a scene in *Don Sebastian* where the corrupt Mufti declares the voice of the *mobile* to be the voice of God, a nice parody of *vox populi, vox dei*; yet the rabble does in fact prove to be one of two agencies that overthrow the bad characters and re-establish the good. Dryden believed the energy or vitality of the rabble is its important feature – generally to be feared, but not *always* bad in its effect.

Athens, no doubt, did righteously decide,
When *Phocion* and when *Socrates* were try'd;
As righteously they did those dooms repent;
Still they were wise, whatever way they went.
Crowds err not, though to both extremes they run;
To kill the Father, and recall the Son.

(*The Medall*, 91–100)

The account is masterly and it is easy to forget its one-sidedness. The arbitrary judgements of the crowd Dryden presents truly enough; the arbitrariness of monarchy and aristocracy he fails to mention. And even if we react to his satire and argue that fickle as the crowd is, it is at least better than arbitrary monarchy, we are still accepting Dryden's version of events. We tend to respond to his identification of Whig policies with republicanism and the fomenting of civil war by saying, what is wrong with republicanism? rather than inquiring whether it is a true identification. Some of the responses to *Absalom and Achitophel*, such as Samuel Pordage's *Azaria and Hushai* (1682), deny Dryden's analysis. Replying to Dryden's charge that 'No King could govern, nor no God please' the English (*Absalom and Achitophel*, 48), Pordage asserted

No people were more ready to obey
Their Kings, who rul'd them by a gentle Sway
Who ever sought their Consciences to curb,
Their Freedom or Religion to disturb …
Tho' Kings they lov'd, and for them Reverence had.
They never would adore them as a God.
God's Worship, and their Laws they did prefer,
They knew, them men might by bad Councils Err.
Tho' Loyal, yet oppress'd, they did not fear
To make their heavy Grievances appear. (1682 edition, 12)

Dryden's implication that the Whigs were *all* violent, bloodthirsty republicans is clearly not true. Certainly, Pordage concedes, 'And some perhaps there were, who thought a King / To be of Charge, and but a useless thing' (23). But Dryden's strategy of presenting all his

opposition as identified with republicanism – and hence advocates of civil war for its achievement – can be seen as the device of a political propagandist. He is engaged in a dispute, he is not a detached, literary observer. It was a strategy Pordage exposed in his reply to *The Medall, The Medall Revers'd. A Satyr against Persecution* (1682):

> With piercing Eyes he does the Medal view
> And there he finds, as he has told to you,
> The Hag *Sedition*, to the life display'd,
> Under a States-man's Gown; fancy'd or made,
> That is all one, he doth it so apply;
> At it th'Artillery of his Wit let fly;
> Lets go his Satyr at the Medal straight,
> Whorries the *Whiggs*, and doth Sedition bait.
> Let him go on, the *Whiggs* the Hag forsake;
> Her cause they never yet would undertake,
> But laugh to see the Poets fond mistake.
> But we will turn the Medal; there we see
> Another Hag, I think as bad as she:
> If I am not mistaken 'tis the same,
> *Christians* of old did *Persecution* name:
> That's still her Name, tho now grown old and wise,
> She has new Names, as well as new disguise.
> Let then his Satyr with *Sedition* fight,
> And ours the whilst shall *Persecution* bite:
> Two Hags they are, who parties seem to make;
> 'Tis time for Satyrs them to undertake. (1683 edition, 3–4).

Pordage is no match as a writer for Dryden. And the danger is that Dryden's poetic skill will persuade us of the truth of the case he puts in *The Medall*. But the Whigs no more wanted another civil war than the Tories. As Pordage writes of the Whigs:

> We dread the effects of a new Civil War.
> We dread *Romes* yoak, to us 'tis hateful grown

And *Rome* will seem a Monster in our Throne. (9)

Certainly there were the violent extremists amongst Shaftesbury's supporters. But it was the Tories' particular technique to use the scare of civil war as a weapon against the Whigs, as Pordage tells us:

They will not let the Graves and Tombs alone,
But Conjure up the Ghost of Fourty One.
With this they try the ignorant to scare,
For men are apt the worst of things to fear,
Tho that Ghost is no liker Eighty two
Than a good *Christian* like a *Turk* or *Jew*. (12)

Despite its subtitle 'A Satyre Against Sedition', *The Medall* is not a general satire on a general vice. The diatribe is directed against a specific occasion – the jury's verdict of 'Ignoramus' to the attempted indictment of Shaftesbury. Today we see the classical satires of Juvenal and Persius as primarily interesting for their general indictments of general vices. But the seventeenth-century habit was to look for specific historical references in their work. Persius, Dryden wrote in his 'Argument of the prologue to the first satyr' 'liv'd in dangerous Times of the Tyrant *Nero*; and aims particularly at him, in most of his Satyrs.' The specific railing of *The Medall* would have appeared to contemporaries as a satire very much in the classical tradition.

Barten Holyday's translation of Persius appeared in 1616, and of Juvenal in 1673; Sir Robert Stapylton's translation of *The first six satyrs of Juvenal* appeared in 1644, and the complete work in 1647. There were numerous other translations of individual satires of Juvenal.[239] There was no point in Dryden's attempting another scholarly, close translation. That had been done and, in his view, done badly:

If rendring the exact sense of these Authors, almost line for line, had been our business, *Barten Holyday* had done it already to our hands: And, by the help of his

[239] Quotations are from *Juvenals Sixteen Satyrs or, A Survey of the Manners and Actions of Mankind* by Sir Robert Stapylton (London, 1647); and *Decimus Junius Juvenalis, And Aulus Persius Flaccus Translated* by Barten Holyday (Oxford, 1673). Together with other translations they are discussed by G. L. Broderson, 'Seventeenth-Century Translations of Juvenal', *The Phoenix, The Journal of the Classical Association of Canada*, 7, 1953, 57–76.

> Learned Notes and Illustrations, not only of *Juvenal*, and *Persius*, but what yet is more obscure, his own Verses might be understood.
>
> But he wrote for Fame, and wrote to Scholars: We write only for the Pleasure and Entertainment, of those Gentlemen and Ladies, who tho they are not Scholars, are not Ignorant. (Kinsley, ed., II. 668)

The extreme alternative to the attempted 'rendring the exact sense' was the imitation, in which writers were able to use a considerable latitude of paraphrase, to expand, 'to supply the lost excellencies of another *Language* with new ones in their own'.[240] And once the principle of introducing new excellencies of language was accepted, new excellencies of allusions, settings, incidents and modern references were readily incorporated. Dr Johnson wrote of *London*, his imitation of Juvenal's third satire, 'part of the beauty of the performance (if any beauty be allow'd it) [consists] in adapting Juvenal's Sentiments to modern facts and Persons'.[241] The strength of such imitations lay in the vitality of their verse, unrestricted to 'the exact sense', and in the relevance and ironies of their modernizations. Thomas Wood's *Juvenalis Redivivus, or the First Satyr of Juvenal taught to speak plain English* (1683) included the Latin text at the foot of each page, but updated Juvenal's attack on bad classical poets to attack those who were Dryden's contemporary targets:

> But of all plagues *Mack Fleckno* is the worst,
> With Guts and Poverty severely curst:
> Large is his Corps, his mighty works do swell,
> Both carefully fill'd up, and stuff'd from Hell:
> *Eternal* Sot, *all o're* a publick Ass,
> Is cypher'd in the *margin* of his Face. (1683 edition, p. 2)

Juvenal and Persius had achieved currency in late seventeenth-century English satire not through the painstaking translations of Stapylton or Holyday, but through the contemporary imitations. The French poet Boileau in his satires, first published in 1666, drew largely on those of Horace and Juvenal. He did not offer translations or even modernized paraphrases, but would draw on more than one satire for material for one of his own. His 'imitations' were

[240] Abraham Cowley, Preface to *Pindarique Odes* (1656), cited in Harold F. Brooks, 'The Imitation in English Poetry', *Review of English Studies*, 25, 1949, 124-40.
[241] *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1952), vol. 1, 11.

in turn imitated by such English satirists as Rochester, Butler and Oldham. In this way Juvenal and Persius reached English readers – though reached them only indirectly. By 1687 when Dryden began his translations,[242] there was need for a version that would attempt to render the content of what Juvenal and Persius had written, that would attempt a translation rather than an imitation of what they might have written had they lived in seventeenth-century England; but at the same time, a version that would have the vigorous manner of the original Latin, that would have a satiric bite comparable to that of contemporary satire and the free imitations. Stapylton and Holyday had precision but lost fluency, lost poetry – and hence lost relevance. Unless translations work as poems, their critiques and moralities will not engage the reader. It was on the achievement of a vigorous and lively style that Dryden put his stress for the relevance of the satires, rather than any modernization of reference or any seeking out of contemporary equivalents for the allusions they made. Attempts to make Juvenal 'express the Customs and Manners of our Native Country, rather than of *Rome*' occur rarely in Dryden's translations: 'the Manners of Nations and Ages, are not to be confounded: We shou'd either make them *English* or leave them *Roman*' (Kinsley, ed., II. 669–70). The very generality of the vices and delusions Juvenal and Persius denounced, the timeless recurrence of their themes, ensured their continuing relevance.

In avoiding the pursuit of 'the exact sense', Dryden also avoids the archaeological perpetuation of classical detail. By tactfully excluding obscure references he allows the satires to have a contemporary applicability. In the 'Argument of the First Satyr' of Juvenal Dryden admits to having 'omitted most of the Proper Names, because I thought they wou'd not much edifie the Reader'. Clearing away the accretions of time – he explains that he has also 'avoided as much as I cou'd possibly the borrow'd Learning of Marginal Notes and Illustrations' (Kinsley, ed., II. 671) – he allows the enduring moral and satirical relevance of the satires to shine through unimpeded. In the packed, cumbersome verse of Stapylton's version of Juvenal's third satire, the danger of collapsing houses and fires in cities is distanced for English readers by the preservation of the original proper names:

> Who feares or ever fear'd in country townes
> Their bane, at moist *Preneste,* where wood crownes
> The *Volsian* cliffs, among the simple sort
> Of *Gabians,* or in bending *Tibur*'s fort?

[242] Harold F. Brooks, 'Dryden's Juvenal and the Harveys', *Philological Quarterly*, 48,1969, 12–19.

We fill a towne shoard-up with slender poles
Brought by the Boore, who th'old wide-gaping holes
Dawbes over, and then bids us sleepe secure,
When we to sleep for ever, may be sure.
Let me live where no night-shrieks terrify,
Here one, fire fire, here others water cry,
Vcalegon tugs out his lumber there;
Below they've chimneys, therefore fire may feare,
But thou three stories high unwarn'd art took,
That couldst for no mischance but drowning look,
The raine from thy loft being kept away
Only by tiles, where eggs soft pidgions lay. (III. 221–36)

Dryden, however, drops the limiting, classical references, so allowing for the drawing 'of Analogy, betwixt their Customes and ours' (Kinsley, ed., II. 670). He retains the well-known Cumae as the country town alternative to Rome, but delays mentioning Rome itself, introducing it initially by the periphrastic 'the World's Metropolis', a phrase so applicable to London for Dryden's readers that the analogies are immediately established; with the result that the fire takes on associations with the Great Fire of London. The entire vocabulary allows for such an analogy in its contemporary naturalness and specificity – gutters, cock-lofts, garrets.

Who fear, in Country Towns, a House's fall,
Or to be caught betwixt a riven Wall?
But we Inhabit a weak City, here;
Which Buttresses and Props but scarcely bear:
And 'tis the Village Masons daily Calling,
To keep the World's Metropolis from falling.
To cleanse the Gutters, and the Chinks to close;
And, for one Night, secure his Lord's Repose.
At *Cumae* we can sleep, quite round the Year:
Nor Falls, nor Fires, nor Nightly Dangers fear;
While rolling Flames from *Roman* Turrets fly,

And the pale Citizens for Buckets cry.
Thy Neighbour has remov'd his Wretched Store
(Few hands will rid the Lumber of the Poor)
Thy own third Story smoaks; while thou, supine,
Art drench'd in Fumes of undigested Wine.
For if the lowest Floors already burn,
Cock-lofts and Garrets soon will take the Turn.
Where thy tame Pidgeons next the Tiles were bred,
Which in their Nests unsafe, are timely fled. (III. 312–31)

Dryden's version becomes immediately intelligible to his seventeenth-century readers by relating to their own experiences and myths. At the same time Dryden remains faithful to the original, avoiding the addition or substitution of contemporary equivalents; he has cleared away the inhibitingly academic so that the contemporary can suggest itself.

In the later recommendation to leave the city and live modestly in the country, Dryden does substitute the theatre for the Roman circus, but this is not a substitution of something foreign to Roman life, for Juvenal writes of the theatre elsewhere in his third satire. It is a substitution that makes the same point as the original – of abandoning urban pleasures; and at the same time Dryden omits the distancing detail of the possible country districts to retire to around Rome. Holyday's version opens

Could'st thou but leave the *Circus*, and wouldst go
To *Fabrateria*, *Sora*, *Frusino* …

Dryden, however, immediately creates a world that could be either Juvenal's Rome or Dryden's England. Nothing in his version is inappropriate to either:

But, cou'd you be content to bid adieu
To the dear Play-house, and the Players too,
Sweet Country Seats are purchas'd ev'ry where,
With Lands and Gardens, at less price, than here
You hire a darksome doghole by the year.
A small Convenience, decently prepar'd,

A shallow Well, that rises in your yard,
That spreads his easie Crystal Streams around;
And waters all the pretty spot of Ground.
There, love the Fork; thy Garden cultivate;
And give thy frugal Friends a *Pythagorean* Treat.
'Tis somewhat to be Lord of some small Ground;
In which a Lizard may, at least, turn round. (II. 363–75)

When Dr Johnson treated this passage in *London*, he provided something as specifically limited to England as Holyday's version was to Rome. Like Dryden, Johnson replaces the circus with the playhouse; but unlike Dryden he does not simply remove the proper names, he provides English substitutes.

Could'st thou resign the park and play content,
For the fair banks of Severn or of Trent;
There might'st thou find some elegant retreat,
Some hireling senator's deserted seat;
And stretch thy prospects o'er the smiling land.
For less than rent the dungeons of the Strand;
There prune thy walks, support thy drooping flow'rs,
Direct thy rivulets, and twine thy bow'rd;
And, while thy grounds a cheap repast afford,
Despise the dainties of a venal lord:
There ev'ry bush with nature's musick rings,
There ev'ry breeze bears health upon its wings;
On all thy hours security shall smile,
And bless thine evening walk and morning toil. (210–22)[243]

Dryden's version allows us to make such interpretations of the Strand or the River Severn or Trent; Johnson's restricts his poem to them. Yet Johnson oddly retains a Roman senator – not an English political title at all; and he continually mixes the English specificities of his

[243] Samuel Johnson, *Poems*, ed. E. L. McAdam, Jr., with George Milne, *The Works of Samuel Johnson* (New Haven and London, 1964), vol. 6, 58.

version with Latin names for characters – Orgilio, Thales, Clodio. This is an inconsistency that Dryden scrupulously avoids, except for his substitution of Shadwell for the bad poet Cluvienus who appears in Juvenal's first satire. Dryden reduces the classical specificities but nonetheless keeps them consistent; he offers a reduced classical model from which we can draw contemporary analogies. Johnson presents a classicized contemporary England.

Johnson's two imitations of Juvenal have always been interpreted as moral critiques of eighteenth-century life; they have been read as original poems and their episodes often given personal interpretation. Richard Savage has been seen as the original of Thales in his farewell to London. The famous line in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, 'slow rises worth by poverty depressed', has been taken as a restrained expression of Johnson's youthful experiences. Dryden's translations of Juvenal, however, have generally been considered as simple, workaday translations; even when they have been recognised as good translations they have not often been read as poetic creations. But though not as free as Johnson's imitations, they have a poetic integrity lacking in the close renderings of Stapylton and Holyday. Dryden is carefully handling his material to give a true and lively account of Juvenal, but he is vitally concerned to make his versions relevant to the seventeenth century, to make them live as contemporary poems. By removing obstacles to contemporary acceptance he produces translations that are faithful and yet have a renewed personal meaning:

> No Profit rises from th'ungrateful Stage,
> My Poverty increasing with my Age;
> 'Tis time to give my just Disdain a vent,
> And, Cursing, leave so base a Government. (III. 41–4)

The details are equally applicable to Juvenal's Umbricius in Rome and to Dryden's personal experience in seventeenth-century London. In the vivid accounts of the corruptions of the theatre, the dangers of being beaten up in the city, the oppressive noise and traffic of the metropolis, Dryden has found in Juvenal a voice that readily becomes his own. And a further depth is added to Dryden's sceptical conservatism by not imitating or modernizing. The idea of the Restoration as England's Augustan age gave the dignity of classical precedent; but here we see a classical precedent for the corruptions, for the decline of society. London is merely repeating the errors of Rome. That a satire on second-century Rome should apply so readily

to seventeenth-century London, with no modifications, is the most depressing realization of all.

If the corruptions of Rome provide a type of the corruptions of London, then the attack on those corruptions could provide the model manner of attack for the seventeenth century. In his translations of Juvenal and Persius Dryden is offering a procedure for contemporary satirists. He is offering in effect a cultural programme. The long, prefatory 'Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire' fulfils an educational role in supplying a history and definition of the genre, carefully distinguishing between the varieties of satire – Varronian, Horatian and Juvenalian. Dryden considers, and rejects, the two main English streams of satire, the roughness of John Donne and the burlesque of Samuel Butler: '*Donne* alone, of all our Countrymen, had your Talent,' he writes to his dedicatee, the Earl of Dorset; 'but was not happy enough to arrive at your Versification. And were he Translated into Numbers, and *English*, he wou'd yet be wanting in the Dignity of Expression' (Kinsley, ed., II. 603). Dryden stands out from the English Elizabethan and Jacobean satirists in his avoidance of the obscurities and metrical roughness they deliberately cultivated. To imply that Donne did not write English is perhaps somewhat excessive. But Donne, Hall and Marston did believe that the obscurity of Juvenal and Persius was appropriately and properly emulated in the crabbed, tortured and rough manner encouraging the reader in the belief that matters of importance were concealed, appealing to an élite of readers who could take trouble with the obscurities.[244] Dryden departed from this tradition. And though his style varies in *MacFlecknoe*, *Absalom and Achitophel*, and *The Medall*, it is a variation within the limits of clarity and fluency. His praise of his contemporary Oldham's satires is ambiguous in its reaction to their notorious roughness. He says that satire does not *need* fluency and ease, rather than saying it should *avoid* them as the Elizabethans and Oldham believed, and he implies that Oldham's roughness was a result of his youth, his poetic immaturity:

> O early ripe! To thy abundant store
> What could advancing Age have added more?
> It might (what Nature never gives the young)
> Have taught the numbers of thy native Tongue.

[244] Raymond MacDonald Alden, *The Rise of Formal Satire in England Under Classical Influence*, *University of Pennsylvania Series in Philology, Literature, and Archaeology*, 7, 2 (Philadelphia, 1899); Arnold Stein, 'Donne's Obscurity', *English Literary History*, 13, 1946, 98–118; R. Selden, 'Roughness in Satire from Horace to Dryden', *Modern Language Review*, 66, 1971, 264–72.

But Satyr needs not those, and Wit will shine
Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line.
A noble Error, and but seldom made,
When Poets are by too much force betray'd.
('To the Memory of Mr Oldham', 11–18)

Wit will shine through, but the harsh cadence and rugged line are an error all the same. Oldham's 'Satire in imitation of the third of Juvenal' shows his characteristics – the deliberately discordant half rhymes, the harsh elisions and crammed lines, the slang and familiar phrases, all contributing to the easy, colloquial manner:

Whoe'er at Barnet or St Albans, fears
To have his lodging drop about his ears,
Unless a sudden hurricane befall,
Or such a wind as blew old Noll to hell?
Here we build slight, what scarce outlasts the lease,
Without the help of props and buttresses;
And houses now-a-days as much require
To be ensured from falling, as from fire.
There, buildings are substantial, though less neat,
And kept with care both wind and water tight;
There, you in safe security are blessed,
And nought, but conscience, to disturb your rest.
I am for living where no fires affright,
No bells rung backward breaks my sleep at night;
I scarce lie down, and draw my curtains here,
But straight I'm rous'd by the next house on fire;
Pale, and half dead with fear, myself I raise,
And find my room all over in a blaze;
By this't has seized on the third stairs, and I
Can now discern no other remedy,
But leaping out a window to get free;
For if the mischief from the cellar came,

Be sure the garret is the last takes flame.[245]

Oldham's harshness and roughness were avoided in Henry Higden's translations of Juvenal's tenth and thirteenth satires. Higden made Juvenal fluent and genial, and Dryden praised him for tempering Juvenal's savagery – 'You make him Smile in spight of all his Zeal' (Kinsley, ed., I. 466). But Higden's was again not a manner Dryden followed. Higden drew on Butler's octosyllabic *Hudibras* for his model, a tradition Dryden rejected, praising Butler but remarking in his *Discourse* on satire:

> In any other Hand, the shortness of his Verse, and the quick returns of Rhyme, had debas'd the Dignity of Style. And besides, the double Rhyme, (a necessary Companion of Burlesque Writing) is not so proper for Manly Satire, for it turns Earnest too much to Jest, and gives us a Boyish kind of Pleasure. It tickles aukwardly with a kind of pain …
>
> I wou'd prefer the Verse of ten Syllables, which we call the *English* Heroique, to that of Eight. This is truly my Opinion. For this sort of Number is more Roomy. The Thought can turn it self with greater ease in a large compass. When the Rhyme comes too thick upon us, it straightens the Expression; we are thinking of the Close, when we shou'd be employ'd in adorning the Thought. It makes a Poet giddy with turning in a Space too narrow for his Imagination. He loses many Beauties without gaining one Advantage. (Kinsley, ed., II. 663, 664)

Higden's description of Sejanus's fall in *A Modern Essay on the Tenth Satyr of Juvenal* (1687) is vigorous, readable and lively, but certainly lacking 'Dignity of Style':

> The Founders Fournace grows red hot,
> *Sejanus* Statue goes to pot:
> That Head lately ador'd, and rekond
> In all the Universe the Second,
> Melted new forms and shapes assumes,
> Of Pisspots, Frying-pans, and Spoons … (1683 edition, 13)

[245] *The Poems of John Oldham*, ed., Robert Bell (London, 1960), 197–8.

Dryden retains the pisspot – something Johnson would have thought improper and undignified – but he uses it as the anti-climactic, shocking conclusion to the marvellous amplitude, the measured dignity, or the preceding lines:

> The Smith prepares his Hammer for the Stroke
> While the Lung'd Bellows hissing Fire provoke;
> *Sejanus* almost first of *Roman* Names
> The great *Sejanus* crackles in the Flames:
> Form'd in the Forge, the Pliant Brass is laid
> On Anvils; and of Head and Limbs are made,
> Pans, Cans and Pispots, a whole Kitchin Trade. (X. 91–7)

It is not simply that Dryden avoids the roughness of Oldham and the burlesque of Higden. The new style he establishes is one of much greater range and flexibility than the limited manners of those two. Dryden is able to achieve the effects of harshness and of burlesque comedy without sacrificing his tone utterly to those modes. Dr Johnson complained that Dryden's Juvenal lacked dignity – a complaint that has persisted, particularly when Johnson's own solemn versions are compared with it:

> The general character of this translation will be given, when it is said to preserve the wit but to want the dignity of the original. The peculiarity of Juvenal is a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences, and declamatory grandeur. His points have not been neglected; but his grandeur none of the band seemed to consider as necessary to be imitated, except Creech, who undertook the thirteenth *Satire*.[246]

But if we see Dryden's version in the context of the scurrilous lampoons written against him, and of the rough, informal manner of Oldham and of the burlesque of *Hudibras*, we can get a better sense of what its impact was on the seventeenth-century reader.

Probably Dryden's commendatory poem 'To my Ingenious Friend, Mr. Henry Higden, Esq: On his Translation of the Tenth Satyr of Juvenal' is to be seen not as an

[246] Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, ed., G. B. Hill, vol. 1, 447–8. A similar verdict is given in William Frost, *Dryden and the Art of Translation* (New Haven, 1955), 67–9. However, H. A. Mason has argued that Dryden is often 'more faithful to Juvenals's *tone*' in 'Is Juvenal a Classic?' in *Critical Essays on Roman Literature: Satire*, ed. J. P. Sullivan (London, 1963), 107–15.

advocacy of Higden's poetic manner, but as another round in the feud with Shadwell. Higden tells in his preface how having completed the translation 'Mr. *Shadwell* did me the Favour to peruse it, keeping it for a considerable Time by him: At the Return he told me, He had a mind to Translate it for his Diversion.' Shadwell's translation then appeared first, stealing Higden's potential readership. Shadwell used the preface to his own translation to attack Dryden. He complained about *MacFlecknoe* and attacked the very idea of translation as a fit occupation. Dryden's *Sylvae* with its translations and its preface on translation had appeared two years earlier, in 1685. Dryden may well have been happy enough to offer Higden some support.

Shadwell's translation is a convenient way of showing the strength of Dryden's, of showing not just Shadwell's overall lack of elegance and flexibility, but also the ineptness a bad translation can fall into, and the opportunities it can miss. The famous conclusion to Juvenal's tenth satire with its declaration of *mens sana in corpora sano* as the best and most worthwhile hope that man can have appears in Shadwell's version not simply in its original pagan context but with the disqualifying absurdities of certain comic combinations of words:

> Yet –
> That you may ask, and offer at some *Shrine*
> Or *Holy place*, your *Sausages Divine*.
> And the choice *entrails* of a pure white *Swine*.
> Pray for a healthful body, a sound mind
> That's never to the fear of death inclined … (Summers, ed., V.320)

At least Holyday's 'With a white Hoggs pure sasages, still crave / In a sound Body, a sound Mind, so Brave / That Death ne're daunt it' (1673 edition, 192) avoids the clumsy 'Sausages Divine', which appears like an oxymoron from a burlesque poem. Shadwell, moreover, emphasizes the dangerously comic aspect of the pagan ritual by putting his inept phrase in the stressed position at the line's end, and then grotesquely rhyming 'divine' with 'swine'. So striking is the discord that the reader expects some witty or satiric point is being made by the rhyme. But it is not. Shadwell is using rhyme simply to hold the lines together, not to make a point. Dryden's version of these lines reduces the pagan aspects in order to emphasize the permanent morality of Juvenal's positive. '*This Divine Satyr*' Dryden calls it in the Argument, following many ecclesiastics in seeing in it a Christian morality, and he glosses it in Christian terms: '*All we can safely ask of Heaven, lies within a very small Compass. 'Tis*

but Health of Body and Mind.' His translation describes the pagan altars in terms suitable for Christian ceremonies:

> Yet, not to rob the Priests of pious Gain,
> That Altars be not wholly built in vain;
> Forgive the Gods the rest, and stand confin'd
> To Health of Body, and Content of Mind:
> A Soul, that can securely Death defie,
> And count it Nature's Priviledge, to Dye … (X. 547–51)

An avoidance of the invalidatingly archaeological, the allowance of contemporary application, dignity – these positive achievements of Dryden's shine in contrast with the incompetent way in which Shadwell handles the verse. In his account of Hannibal, for instance, Shadwell produces the amazing couple 'To *Æthiopian* Inhabitants, / And to a different kind of Elephants' (Summers, ed., V.308). Juvenal's other elephants have been a perpetual scholarly crux and Holyday and Stapylton produce comparable absurdities – all of them detracting from Juvenal's fine point about human morality. Dryden, with his poet's sense of language, copes with the crux and removes the difficult elephants from a stressed position: 'Which Ethiopia's double Clime divides, / And Elephants in other Mountains hides' (X. 240–1). But he brilliantly exploits the comic potential of elephants as a stressed rhyme word in a context where it is appropriate a few lines later, when he comes to Hannibal's empty glory:

> Ask what a Face belong'd to this high Fame;
> His Picture scarcely would deserve a Frame:
> A Sign-Post Dawber wou'd disdain to paint
> The one Ey'd Heroe on his Elephant. (X. 252–5)

The grotesque that Shadwell unintentionally and absurdly achieved in the earlier lines is functionally and powerfully placed here. The lines have an epigrammatic bitterness that Stapylton, Holyday and Shadwell utterly fail to approach: 'O how did th' one-ey'd Generall's picture look, / Riding on his *Getulian Elephant* took' (Stapylton, X. 179–80); 'O goodly Face and Picture! A one-Eyed / Gen'ral does a *Getulian* Beast bestride!' (Holyday, 188); 'Rare

Visage, what a Picture 'twould appear, / When the *Getulian* Beast does th'one Ey'd *General* bear!' (Shadwell, ed. Summers, V. 308).

The immeasurable superiority of Dryden's version of Juvenal and Persius to those of his predecessors and contemporaries lies in his creating his translations as poetry. He is not simply turning Latin into English and tagging the lines with rhymes. He is thinking through the rhyme, using it for meaning; he is using the verse movement, the stresses, the combinations of words and phrases, the choice of vocabulary, to make his satiric and moral points. And he is brilliantly able to modulate from tone to tone within a passage. The opening of Juvenal's sixth satire finely encompasses dignity and vulgarity, nostalgic amplitude and satiric bitterness: 'In *Saturn's* Reign, at Nature's Early Birth, / There was that Thing call'd Chastity on Earth …' VI.1–2). The exploitation of discrepancy, of high expectation and debased actuality, is at its most successful in Dryden's account of the cuckolding of Emperor Claudius (denoted by the burlesque periphrasis 'the good old Sluggard') by his wife Messalina, 'th'Imperial Whore' – a powerful oxymoron. The two phrases establish the tonal range of the passage:

> The good old Sluggard but began to snore,
> When from his side up rose th'Imperial Whore. (VI. 163–4)

Messalina's desperate session as a prostitute provokes some of Dryden's most powerful verse. There is not just the disgusted censure of the moralist – 'Ropy Smut' and 'foul'. Certainly he captures her hypocrisy – 'the modest Matron'. And with a cold, numbly objective periphrasis all the more powerful for its seeming avoidance of the emotional or descriptive, shows her betrayal – 'brings him back the Product of the Night'. But Dryden captures also her desperate yearning, her desperate sadness:

> Prepar'd for fight, expectingly she lies.
> With heaving Breasts, and with desiring Eyes:
> Still as one drops, another takes his place,
> And baffled still succeeds to like disgrace.
> At length, when friendly darkness is expir'd,
> And every Strumpet from her Cell retir'd.
> She lags behind, and lingering at the Gate,

With a repining Sigh, submits to Fate:
All Filth without and all a Fire within,
Tir'd with the Toyl, unsated with the Sin.
Old *Caesar*'s Bed the modest Matron seeks;
The steam of Lamps still hanging on her Cheeks
In Ropy Smut; thus foul, and thus bedight,
She brings him back the Product of the Night. (V. 176–89)

The sadness of Messalina is expressed in the language of sensation, the 'heaving Breasts', 'desiring Eyes', 'lingring', 'repining Sigh', 'submits to Fate'. Dryden's treatment of her dealings with her customers differs from that of his predecessors. She 'Smil'd upon all that came,' Stapylton writes (VI. 133) and Holyday offers 'Kind words she gave / To them that came, and the Reward did crave!' (p. 93). But Dryden emphasizes here not her hypocrisy or betrayal but her wretchedness, her inability to find the satisfaction she sought. 'Still as one drops, another takes his place, / And baffled still succeeds to like disgrace.' To a lesser writer 'disgrace' would have been reserved for Messalina, but Dryden boldly applies it to the customers who have failed to give her satisfaction, just as he strikingly applies 'submits to Fate' not to an inevitable submission to degradation but to her having to accept that the brothel has finished business for the night. Dryden's strength comes not only from his superior craftsmanship but from his sense of the emotional potential of the material, his drawing out the emotional meanings and the powerful ambiguities of feeling that make his satires so rich. He does not provide simple diatribe or simple disgust. His world picture is much more complex than that.

The translation of Persius' satires is less interesting. His work was well known to Dryden. In the argument to the third and to the fifth satires Dryden recalls how he had translated them at school, and we can see how satire six, on the use of riches, informed the portrait of Shimei in *Absalom and Achitophel*. But Dryden fails to make Persius especially interesting for us, despite the clarity of the translation. There are passages that achieve a lively vigour, like that of the glutton who persists in drinking, eating and bathing until 'he vomits out his Soul' (III. 205), and like that on impotence – 'bid'st arise the lumpish *Pendulum*' (IV. 119). And Dryden evidently enjoyed the parodies of pompous and dated verse styles in the first satire (I.

185–204). But though we can find striking passages, fragments and epigrams, overall Persius is much less interesting than Juvenal and Dryden does not do much with his material.[247]

The remarkable feature of Dryden's satires is that he never repeated himself. In *MacFlecknoe* he achieved a monstrously witty mock heroic whose vulgar comedy still provokes ribald laughter. But it was left to Alexander Pope's *Dunciad* to extend the onslaught on dullness with its scatological imagery and literary allusions. Dryden achieved his satiric aim in brief and never went back. With *Absalom and Achitophel* he proceeded with dignity, and the brilliant character sketches, sharp and devastatingly witty as they can be, retained that tone. The sketches he wrote for Nahum Tate's continuation of *Absalom and Achitophel* have a broad humour, a more visual and a more genial quality than the analytical, conceptual characterizations of part I. *The Medall* differs again in being written in a tone of barely controlled fury – or a cunning feigning of such a tone. There is none of the comedy or dignity of the other works but instead a sustained, virulent diatribe. And having achieved success in all these varieties Dryden does not lamely return to attempt a repetition. Never niggardly about his gains, he was always moving on to something else. Having had his own say in satire, when he returned to the form later it was to familiarize his readers with the achievements of the classical past, rather than to repeat himself. The translations draw on his particular satiric practices, but draw, too, on a whole career of poetic and dramatic writing, to give a fluency, a clarity and a tonal range that made his translations a model for the next hundred years.

[247] For a lively discussion of translations of Persius, including Dryden's, see William Frost, 'English Persius: The Golden Age', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 2, 1968–9, 77–101.

Andrew Marvell: Reception and Reputation

I

For nearly three centuries the problem facing writers on Andrew Marvell has been how to take into account the different facets of their subject. He was lyric poet, verse satirist, prose controversialist, conscientious Member of Parliament, defender of religious liberty, patriot. These different aspects have all at different times been emphasized, and in the critical and biographical accounts of him we see continually shifting emphases, rather than the achievement of any integrated or balanced assessment of his variety. He is now primarily appreciated as a lyric poet, and it is something of a shock to realize that for his contemporaries, and for the century and a half following his death, this was the least significant of his roles.

A few of his non-satirical poems are known to have been published or circulated in his lifetime, but they seem to have attracted little comment. John Aubrey, who knew Marvell, remarked briefly that 'he was a great master of the Latin tongue; an excellent poet in Latin or English; for Latin verse there was no man could come into competition with him.'[248] But the hostile author of *A Letter from Amsterdam to a Friend in England* (1678) commented 'it is well he is now transported into politicks; they say he had much ado to live upon poetry.' Samuel Parker, whom Marvell had attacked in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, referred in his *Reproof* (1673) to the attack, to Marvell's 'having profess'd wit and rithm these fifty years' and mentioned his 'juvenile Essays of Ballads, Poesies, Anagrams, and Acrosticks.' Parker returned to Marvell in his *History of His Own Time*, which appeared in an English translation by Thomas Newlin in 1727. Two index entries set the tone: 'Marvel, a scurrilous slanderer, publishes infamous libels', and 'Libels (infamous). See Marvel.' Parker records:

> As he had liv'd in all manner of wickedness from his youth, so being of a singular impudence and petulancy of nature, he exercised the province of a Satyrist, for the use of the Faction, being not to much a Satyrist thro' quickness of wit, as sowerness of temper; of but indifferent parts, except it were in the talent of railing and malignity … A vagabond, ragged, hungry Poetaster, being beaten at every tavern, he daily receiv'd

[248] *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford, 1898), 2, 53.

> the rewards of his sawciness in kicks and blows. At length, by the interest of *Milton*, to whom he was somewhat agreeable for his ill-natur'd wit, he was made Under-secretary to *Cromwell*'s Secretary. Pleas'd with which honour, he publish'd a congratulatory poem in praise of the Tyrant; but when he had a long time labour'd to squeeze out a panegyrick, he brought forth a satyr upon all rightful Kings.

And Parker goes on to give a lengthy paraphrase of 'The First Anniversary'. Parker had no doubts about its authorship, although it had first appeared anonymously and had later been attributed to Waller.

Marvell died in 1678. In 1681 a posthumous collection of *Miscellaneous Poems* 'By Andrew Marvell, Esq; Late Member of the Honourable House of Commons', was issued. Probably to capitalize on his reputation for political satire, readers were reminded that he was an M. P. Anthony à Wood recorded that upon publication the poems 'were then taken into the hands of many persons of his persuasion, and by them cried up as excellent.'[249] But no record of such praise is known, and any possible political controversy the volume might have provoked was prevented by the removal of the three Cromwell poems during production of the book. Only two surviving copies of the edition are known to contain 'An Horatian Ode', 'The First Anniversary' and 'Upon the Death of His late Highness the Lord Protector'.

Marvell was initially remembered not as a poet, but as a politician of incorruptible integrity, and as a satirist and controversialist. 'This island's watchful sentinel' he is called in the anonymous poem 'On His Excellent Friend, Mr Andrew Marvell' (1678). His name was frequently used in the eighteenth century as an exemplum of loyalty and probity. William Mason made Marvell hero of his 'Ode to Independence' (1756), and Charles Churchill commemorated Marvell's 'spotless virtues' in a sonnet, and in six lines of 'The Author' (1763). To his contemporaries and immediate successors, he was best known for his controversial prose writings. *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* provoked the admiration of Anthony à Wood in *Athenae Oxonienses*, Rochester in 'Tunbridge Wells', Bishop Burnet in his *History of My Own Time* and Jonathan Swift in *The Tale of a Tub*; Swift, indeed, shows the influence of Marvell's prose style. And as well as such distinguished praise, Marvell provoked attacks from Dryden in his 'Epistle to the Whigs' and the preface to *Religio Laici*. The verse satires circulated mainly in manuscript during Marvell's lifetime, but they became known to a wider readership after his death, when they were included in the *Poems on Affairs*

[249] Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. P. Bliss (London, 1819), 4, 232.

of State. Two of those collections announced on their title page that they were by 'A----- M----l Esq; and other Eminent Wits'. His name, distinctively, was the name to sell a collection of political satires, and this reputation survived into the eighteenth century. Daniel Defoe, writing in his *Review*, 28 March 1713, recorded that the 'Dialogue between Two Horses' 'so pleas'd the king, that tho' it was the bitterest Satyr, *upon him and his Father*, that ever was made, the king would often repeat them [the verses] with a great deal of Pleasure …' Having quoted from the satire, Defoe commented:

> Let us see anything so sprightly now from the Wits of this Age, and something may be said for them: A Pasquinade ought to be pointing like a Dart, that should wound Mortally at every cast; the sting should be so very sharp, that it should kill even all the Resentment of the Persons Satyriz'd: so that the Person pointed at should be asham'd to be Angry … we pretend much to have a degree of Polite Wit beyond those Days, yet nothing of that keenness of Satyr, the happy turns and brightness of Fancy appears in the lampoons of this Age, that were seen in *Andr. Marvell, Sir John Denham, Rochester, Buckingham, Sedley,* and others …

Defoe's comments are as close as we get to analytic criticism: though Joseph Spence in his *Observations, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Men* assembled from Pope and his circle recorded the defining comment of a Mr Scott saying in 1730 that Marvell's satires were 'rough like Oldham.' No remark of Pope himself is known, though he had certainly read some of the satires.

Enthusiasm for the satires was not, however, universal, and though Marvell had been summoned up as a patriot in John Ayloffe's *Marvell's Ghost* (1689), the patriotism was not always recognized or admired. Thomas Newcomb, in *Bibliotheca … a Modern Library* (1712), groaned:

> Nay, to augment my last despair
> Place Ayloffe's self and Marvell there
> (A fam'd dull pair, that purely wrote
> To raise our spleen, and die forgot).

When Nicholls included *Bibliotheca* in his *Select Collection of Poems* (1780) he added the note, 'the satire on Marvell is wonderfully misplaced', but though he included Ayloffe's poem in his collection, Marvell found no place.

II

When we turn from the satires and controversial prose, when we turn from Marvell the public figure to Marvell the lyric poet, however, there is a sudden absence of comment. His *Miscellaneous Poems* seem to have attracted no attention. The explanation must be that, although poems were still being written in a metaphysical style in the 1680s, the taste for the metaphysical conceit was rapidly passing, while a widespread enthusiasm for Marvell's nature reveries had yet to develop. Dryden remarked in the preface to his *Fables* (1700), probably referring to Abraham Cowley, that 'one of our late great Poets is sunk in his Reputation, because he could never forgive any Conceit which came his way, but swept like a Drag-net, great and small …'[250]

For nearly two centuries this distaste for the conceit persisted. Joseph Addison's *Spectator* essays on false wit were directed largely against the metaphysical poets, though he never alludes to Marvell. He was, however, familiar with 'To his Coy Mistress'. *The Spectator* 89 (12 June 1711), dedicated to 'those that have to do with Women of Dilatory Tempers', contained some striking echoes:

> First of all I would have them seriously think on the Shortness of their Time. Life is not long enough for a Coquet to play all her tricks in. A timorous Woman drops into the Grave before she had done deliberating. Were the Age of Man the same that it was before the Flood, a lady might sacrifice half a century to a Scruple, and be two or three Ages in demurring. Had she Nine Hundred years good, she might hold out to the Conversion of the *Jews*, before she thought fit to be prevailed upon. The finest Skin wrinkles in a few Years, and lose the Strength of its Colouring so soon, that we have scarce time to admire it.

[250] Cited in A. H. Nethercot, 'The Reputation of the "Metaphysical Poets" during the seventeenth century', in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 23 (April 1924) 196. See also R. L. Sharp, *From Donne to Dryden: The Revolt Against Metaphysical Poetry* (Chapel Hill, 1940).

Though the reminiscences show clearly that Marvell's poem was known, it shows equally that it was not known well. If Addison had plagiarized, he must have felt confident that none of his readers would recognize the original. If, as is usually supposed, the echo was unconscious, it shows he had no cause to be aware of or to make a conscious record of what Marvell wrote.

There was scarcely any critical comment on Marvell's poetry in the eighteenth century, although the poems themselves were far from totally lost to view. Of the non-satirical verse, 'To his Coy Mistress', 'Thyrsis and Dorinda', 'Bellipotens Virgo', 'Eyes and Tears', 'The First Anniversary', 'On Blake's Victory' and 'Climb at Court' were printed in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century collections, though not always over Marvell's name. But his authorship was clearly ascribed when Jacob Tonson included nine poems in both his fourth and fifth editions of Dryden's *Miscellany Poems* in 1716 and 1727: the poems were 'Climb at Court', 'The Nymph Complaining', 'Young Love', 'Daphnis and Chloe', 'Damon the Mower', 'Ametas and Thestylis', 'Musicks Empire', 'The Garden' and 'On Paradise Lost'.[251]

Thomas Cooke's two-volume edition of Marvell's works, containing lyrics, satires and some prose, appeared in 1726. Cooke remarked in his dedication to the Duke of Devonshire, 'I make no Doubt, but the Works of a Man, who has every Way deserved so well of his country as Mr Marvell has, will meet with the Success they deserve.' The poems were hung on the peg of Marvell's political reputation, and Cooke had little to say about them.

> There are few of his Poems which have not Something pleasing in them, and some he must be allowed to have excelled in. Most of them seem to be the Effect of a lively Genius, and manly Sense, but at the same Time seem to want that Correctness he was capable of making. If we have any which may be properly said to come finished from his Hands, they are these, *On Milton's Paradise Lost*, *On Blood's stealing the Crown*, and *A Dialogue between two Horses*. The last of which is a Satire good as it is severe.

The lyrics conspicuously failed to arouse Cooke's interest. His concern in his introductory Life is with Marvell's political reputation and writings.

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[251] Douglas Bush, *English Literature In The Earlier Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1945), 103; H. M. Margoliouth, *Times Literary Supplement*, 1950, 309; T. T. Dombras, 'Poetical Miscellanies 1684–1716', unpublished D. Phil thesis, Oxford, 1951; E. F. Hart, 'Caroline Lyrics and Contemporary Song-books', *Library*, 8, 5th series (June 1953), 98, 108–9.

The most enthusiastic response to one of Marvell's lyrics in the century occurs in *Human Physiognomy Explained* (1747), a series of lectures to the Royal Society by James Parsons, a doctor of wide reading. Discussing tears, and having quoted from Juvenal, he remarked on 'Eyes and Tears':

> But, besides these, I find an *English* Poet singing their other Uses in the most pathetic and engaging manner; whose charming Song it would be unpardonable to conceal, since no Language can boast of one more expressive upon the Subject, and where in he has shewn, that Tears are a Blessing peculiar only to human Nature.

He quotes the first twelve stanzas, and appends Marvell's name. Parson's praise is high, and we find nothing similar until the next century. Though Marvell was still remembered as a poet at Cambridge: Edmund Carler in his *History of the University of Cambridge* (1753) recorded amongst the other poets from Trinity College, 'Andrew Marvell Esq: the Poet Laureate of the Dissenters, famed for his Wit, but foiled in his own Weapon by Divine Herbert …'

Cooke's biography served as the basis for the account of Marvell in volume four of *The Lives of the Poets* (1753) 'By Mr Cibber and other hands' – in fact by Robert Shiels. Shiels repeated Cooke's comments and added a further paragraph of his own criticism:

> In order to shew the versification of Mr Marvel, we shall add a beautiful dialogue between the resolved soul, and created pleasure. It is written with a true spirit of poetry, the numbers are various, and harmonious, and is one of the best pieces, in the serious way, of which he is author.

The 'Dialogue' is printed in full, along with 'On Blood's Stealing the Crown'.

Cooke's edition was sufficiently in demand to be reprinted in 1772, and this was followed in 1776 by Captain Edward Thompson's edition of Marvell's works. Thompson remarked that 'the English language does not boast a more elegant elegiack poem' than that on the death of Cromwell, and his edition printed all the Cromwell poems for the first time – as well as work by Addison, Watts and Mallett, which he ascribed to Marvell. 'Poor Mallett!' Edward Gibbon commented, 'his only good piece of poetry … turns out to be the work of the

celebrated Andrew Marvell.'[252] The poems are relegated to volume three, following the letters to the Hull corporation and the prose. Thompson's comments show perhaps a little more appreciation of the poetry than Cooke's, but he habitually drifts into biographical fantasy:

> The compositions of our author are of various sorts, and not less excellent in verse than prose; especially any of those pieces with which he has taken pains: but in general they appear to be the warm effusions of a lively fancy, and are very often thrown off in the extempore moment of their conception and birth, whether begotten in satire or humour … The poem to his *coy mistress* is sweet, natural and easy, and bespeaks his heart to be high in love; and perhaps his not being married might arise from her coldness … His little poem of the *Gallery* loosely and pleasingly depicts this beloved fair one, whom he follows through all his pastoral dialogues, and in a most pleasing and epigrammatical manner in that of *Thyrsis and Dorinda* … The satires and state poems are not more severe than humorous; and indeed, when satire is conveyed in risible terms, so as to raise the laugh against the object, it is the most poignant of any …
>
> His poem *Flecknoe*, though in a slovenly metre, contains much humour and satire upon that incorrigible poetaster, Richard Flecknoe; which was the happy means of giving title, and perhaps birth to the best satyrical poem in the English language, I mean *McFlecknoe*, written by the first poet of this country …

Thompson's choice of Dryden as his 'first poet' in English explains his lack of enthusiasm for Marvell's 'slovenly metre', and his assumption that Marvell did not always take pains to perfect his verse.

Zachary Grey's edition of Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1744) had 1553 subscribers. There were 146 subscribers to Thompson's 1776 edition of Marvell. Amongst the modest number subscribing to Marvell's works were the naturalist Gilbert White and the statesman Edmund Burke. Burke once quotes from 'On Paradise Lost' – a poem Thompson found 'elegant' – in his correspondence[253] but there is no record of what either White or Burke thought of Marvell. Christopher Smart is one of the few eighteenth-century poets who shows

[252] *Letters of Edward Gibbon*, ed. J. R. Norton (London, 1956) vol. 2, 110.
[253] *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. Alfred Cobban and Robert A. Smith (London, 1967) vol. 6, 23.

any familiarity with his works.[254] Despite Thompson's and Cooke's editions, Marvell was not thought to be a significant or representative poet in the eighteenth century. Dr Johnson quoted from 'Ametas and Thestylis' and 'On Blood's Stealing the Crown' in his *Dictionary* (1755) and from 'On Paradise Lost' in his life of Dryden twenty-five years later, but, although the sale catalogue of his library (1785) shows that he possessed a copy of Thompson's edition, he did not include Marvell in his *Lives of the Poets* (1779–81), nor did he give him a mention in his onslaught on the metaphysical poets in his life of Cowley, though the criticism of the metaphysical poets expressed there so classically explains much of Marvell's unpopularity. Anderson in the Preface to his *Poets of Great Britain*, complained at the omission of Marvell (among others) from Johnson's selection, but did not include him in his own, either.

III

In the nineteenth century, interest in Marvell slowly developed. His lyrics were more congenial to Romantic taste than they had been to that of the eighteenth century. Joseph Ritson had included 'The Nymph Complaining' in *The English Anthology* (1793), and the second edition of George Ellis's *Specimen's of English Poetry* (1801) contained abridgements of 'Daphnis and Chloe' and 'Young Love'. In 1816 the Rev Francis Wrangham included a life of Marvell in volume four of *The British Plutarch*, which, though almost totally political in concern, included the verses to Joseph Maniban, 'Bellipotens Virgo', 'The Coronet', 'On Paradise Lost' and 'Britannia and Rawleigh'. The *Quarterly Review* complained in July 1814 of Marvell's omission from Alexander Chalmers's English Poets, but in 1819 Thomas Campbell included in his *Specimens of the British Poets* 'Bermudas', 'Young Love' and part of 'The Nymph Complaining'. Campbell commented, 'His few poetical pieces betray some adherence to the school of conceit, but there is much in it that comes from the heart warm, pure and affectionate', provoking Francis Jeffrey to remark in the *Edinburgh Review*, March 1819, that 'Mr Campbell does not do justice to the sweetness and tenderness which characterize the poetry, as it did the private life, of this inflexible patriot'.

Gradually Marvell's work was anthologized. He was represented in William Hazlitt's *Select British Poets* (London, 1824), in Montgomery's *The Christian Poet* (Glasgow, 1827) and in *Passages from the Poets* (Derby, 1837). But references to the poems, though more

[254] See E. E. Duncan-Jones, *Notes and Queries*, 14 (May 1967) 182.

frequent, remained marginal observations. No sustained critical essay had yet been devoted to him. But the observations show a new appreciation of the poet. In a note to 'Windsor Forest' in his edition of Alexander Pope (1806) the Rev William Lisle Bowles remarked on 'Upon Appleton House' and 'Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow':

> Marvell abounds in conceits and false thoughts, but some of his descriptive touches are picturesque and beautiful. His description of a gently rising eminence is more picturesque, although not so elegantly and justly expressed … Sometimes Marvell observes little circumstances of rural nature with the eye and feeling of a true Poet:
>
> > There as I careless on the bed
> > Of *gelid strawberries* do tread,
> > And thro' the hazels thick, espy
> > The *hatching throstle's shining eye.*
>
> The last circumstance is new, highly poetical, and could only have been described by one who was a real lover of nature, and a witness of her beauties in her most solitary retirements. It is the observation of such *circumstances*, which can alone form an accurate descriptive rural Poet.

The characterization of Marvell as a nature poet was strengthened in John Aikin's *General Biography* (1807) the following year, in a description also placing him among the metaphysical poets:

> His early poems express a fondness for the charm of rural nature, and much delicacy of sentiment; they are ingenious and full of fancy, after the manner of Cowley and his contemporaries.

The major breakthrough in establishing Marvell's reputation as a lyric poet was the work of three critics, close acquaintances of each other, Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt. None of them wrote an essay devoted to Marvell, yet all continually returned to him. Hazlitt, often quoting from Marvell, was the poet's constant advocate. His first critical comment dates from 1818 when, discussing the seventeenth century in his *Lectures on the English Poets* he wrote:

> Marvell is a writer of nearly the same period, and worthy of a better age. Some of his verses are harsh, as the words of Mercury; others musical, as is Apollo's lute. Of the latter kind are his boat-song, his description of a fawn, and his lines to Lady Vere. His lines prefaced to *Paradise Lost* are by no means the most favourable specimen of his powers.

In his lectures on *The English Comic Writers* (1818–19) he went on to write:

> Marvel (on whom I have already bestowed such praise as I could, for elegance and tenderness in his descriptive poems) in his satires and witty pieces was addicted to the affected and involved style here reprobated, as in his Flecknoe … and in his satire on the Dutch. As an instance of this forced, far-fetched method of treating his subject, he says, in ridicule of the Hollanders, that when their dykes overflowed, the fish used to come to table with them, 'And sat not as a meat, but as a guest.' There is a poem of Marvel's on the death of King Charles I which I have not seen, but which I have heard praised by one whose praise is never high but of the highest things, for the beauty and pathos, as well as generous frankness of the sentiments, coming, as they did, from a determined and incorruptible political foe.

Hazlitt praised the 'true poet' Marvell again, bringing him into one of his *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth* (1819) and quoting 'To his Coy Mistress' in full as evidence of his 'sweetness and power'. Including Marvell in his *Select British Poets* (1824) he remarked: 'His satires were coarse, quaint and virulent; but his other productions are full of a lively, tender, and elegant fancy. His verses leave an echo on the ear, and find one in the heart.'[255]

Charles Lamb as early as 1800 quoted, in a letter, from 'Upon Appleton House' 'two honest lines by Marvel, (whose poems by the way I am just going to possess)'.[256] It is possible that Lamb was responsible for introducing Marvell's work to Hazlitt and Hunt, but his first published comment, later than either of them, was not until 1820, when he referred to 'his fine poem' 'Bermudas' – though linking it with a poem on a Kangaroo by Barron Field

[255] William Hazlitt, *Complete Works*, ed. P. P. Howe (London,1930–34) vol. 5, 83; vol. 6, 54, 311–13; vol. 9, 238.
[256] *The Letters of Charles Lamb … and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas (London, 1935) vol. 1, 234, 335.

would scarcely have ensured it popularity.[257] The following year in an Elia essay Lamb quoted five stanzas of 'The Garden', remarking 'They are full, as all his serious poetry was, of a witty delicacy' and it was as 'that garden-loving poet' he referred to Marvell in 1824, quoting from 'Upon Appleton House.'[258]

Leigh Hunt recorded in *Wit and Humour* (1846) how he and Lamb had failed to make Hazlitt see the humour of the 'Character of Holland'. Hunt himself wrote about its humour in 1819, comparing it with Samuel Butler's poem on Holland: 'Marvell's wit has the advantage of Butler's, not in learning or multiplicity of contrasts (for nobody ever beat him there), but in a greater variety of them, and in being able, from the more poetical turn of his mind, to bring graver and more imaginative things to wait upon his levity.' Marvell 'rivalled him in wit, and excelled him in poetry', Hunt remarked. And Hunt deals with Marvell's non-satirical poetry in later essays. In 1820, praising 'On Paradise Lost' as 'spirited and worthy', he went on to write 'We remember how delighted we were to find who Andrew Marvell was, and that he could be so pleasant and lively as well as grave', and in 1823 he remarked on Marvell's 'strong and grave talent for poetry'. In 1837 he wrote, quoting from 'An Horatian Ode', that 'Marvell unites wit with earnestness and depth of sentiment, beyond any miscellaneous writer in the language.'[259]

Lamb, Hazlitt and Hunt mention only nine poems of Marvell's between them, and their comments are not always such as to assure us of their close familiarity with the texts. And yet, because of the popularity of their essays, much reprinted and anthologized, their exhortations that Marvell should be read reached a wide public and did much to establish Marvell's reputation.

'Marvell is a writer almost forgotten', Hazlitt remarked in 1824. *The Retrospective Review* in the same year remarked that 'his *poems*, little read, are by no means so generally known or so critically admired as they richly deserve to be.' The *Review* offered, in the first essay devoted to Marvell, some critical admiration. It found 'The Nymph Complaining' 'the most interesting poetical piece in the whole collection' of 1681; 'To the Glow-worms' 'pretty and fanciful, and more in the taste of the times than Marvell's verse in general'; the

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[257] 'First Fruits of Australian Poetry', *Examiner*, 16 January 1820, reprinted in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas (London, 1912), vol. 1, *Miscellaneous Prose*, 232–4.

[258] 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple', *London Magazine*, 4, September 1821, 279–80; and 'Blakemore in H---shire', *London Magazine*, 9, September 1824, 226; reprinted in *Works*, vol. 2, *Essays of Elia*, 96, 176.

[259] *Indicator*, 7 (24 November 1819) 51; 51 (27 September 1820) 406; vol. 83 (in *Literary Examiner*, 6 September 1823, 148); *Monthly Repository*, 51 (i) NS (December 1837) 413–14. Reprinted in *Leigh Hunt as Poet and Essayist*, ed. Charles Kent (London, 1889), 114–16, 239, 401, and *Leigh Hunt's Literary Criticism*, ed. C. H. and C. W. Houtchens (New York, 1956), 194–5.

'Dialogue between the Soul and Body' 'fanciful and ingenious'; and 'The Character of Holland' 'one of the pleasantest of Marvell's poems … pregnant with wit'. Also quoted or mentioned were 'Upon Appleton House', 'Eyes and Tears'. 'The Garden', 'Flecknoe', 'On Paradise Lost' and 'Climb at Court'. It concluded:

> As a poet, Marvel was certainly unequal; and some of his most beautiful passages are alloyed with vulgarism and common-place similes. His poem of the Nymph lamenting the Death of her Fawn is, perhaps, the most finished, and, on the whole, the best of the collection. All the poems, however, contain more or less of poetic beauty; some, great tenderness of feeling and expression; and others, successful descriptions of nature and pastoral scenes.[260]

Though the criticisms were not extended, they were of the sort to entice readers, and they show the widest familiarity with Marvell's work hitherto.

The changes of taste of the Romantic movement had produced a sort of acceptance of Marvell's non-satirical verse. The eighteenth century's dislike of his 'slovenly metre', want of 'correctness', and qualified enthusiasm for his 'extempore effects' and 'the warm effusion of a lively fancy' are gradually left behind. There is less apparent difficulty in finding anything to say, and a new readiness to discover qualities similar to those of Romantic poetry; feeling 'that comes from the heart warm, pure and affectionate', 'sweetness and tenderness', the 'picturesque', 'successful depictions of nature and pastoral scenes', the detailed recording of 'little circumstances of rural nature', 'delicacy', and 'beauty and pathos'. Conceits and remote images were coldly passed by, as in the eighteenth century, and Lamb alone remarked on the '*witty* delicacy'. Only the persistent memory of the patriot and champion of liberty, existing as strongly as ever, guarded Marvell from becoming an embodiment of the sentimental. He was the poet of nature, sweetness, tenderness. Oddly, however, his poetry seems to have had little influence on the verse of the Romantics. Possibly the last couplet of 'Bermudas' led to the first couple of Tom Moore's 'Canadian Boat Song', and cases have been made for the influence of 'On Paradise Lost' on Shelley's 'To a Skylark'[261] and 'On a Drop of Dew' on Wordsworth's 'Intimations of Immortality'.[262] Certainly Wordsworth admired 'On a Drop of Dew' and included it (all but the last four

[260] *Retrospective Review*, 10, 2 (1824), 328–43; 11, 1 (1825), 174–95.
[261] Irving T. Richards, *PMLA*, 50 (June 1935), 565–7.
[262] A. F. Potts, *The Elegiac Mode* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1967), 91.

lines) in a Christmas album he presented to Lady Mary Lowther in 1819. Wordsworth also knew of Marvell as a political figure of integrity,[263] one of those 'who called Milton friend' he calls him in his 'Great Men' sonnet of 1802, and he had some familiarity, like Coleridge,[264] with the satires. Indeed the patriot and controversialist image persisted, often overshadowing the lyric poet. Isaac D'Israeli in his *Quarrels of Authors* (1814) discussed the Parker–Marvell exchange and made some percipient remarks on Marvell's style as a controversialist. Walter Savage Landor put Marvell in five of his *Imaginary Conversations*, but though two of those with Milton discuss poetry, Marvell's lyrics are ignored. For D'Israeli and Landor, Marvell was not primarily a poet but, as he was for John Clare, who wrote a poem in his name, 'a great advocate for liberty'.[265]

IV

The first book length study was *The Life of Andrew Marvell, the Celebrated Patriot* by John Dove (1832). Its title indicates the emphasis on political biography, but sixteen poems were appended. The critical observations are eclectically plagiarized from Aikin, Thompson, D'Israeli and the *Retrospective Review*, but at least they were given currency, like a Modern Judgements volume. The following year appeared *Biographia Borealis or lives of Distinguished Northerns* by Hartley Coleridge, son of the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This contained a life of Marvell differing in only the slightest verbal details from John Dove's, though without the appendix of poems and their accompanying critical comments. But a paragraph of original comment was added, presumably Hartley Coleridge's own:

> The poems of Marvell are, for the most part, productions of his early youth. They have much of that over-activity of fancy, that remoteness of allusion, which distinguished the school of Cowley; but they have also a heartfelt tenderness, a childish simplicity of feeling, among all their complication of thought, which would atone for all their conceits, if conceit were indeed as great an offence against poetic nature as Addison and other critics of the French school pretend. But though there are cold conceits, a conceit is not necessarily cold. The mind, in certain states of passion,

[263] Una Venables Tuckerman, 'Wordsworth's Plan for his Imitation of Juvenal', *Modern Language Notes*, 45 (April 1930), 209–15; *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt (London, 1935), 541.
[264] *The Notebooks of S. T. Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London,1957), items 702–8.
[265] John and Ann Tibble, *John Clare: His Life and Poetry* (London, 1946), 128, 176.

> finds comfort in playing with occult or casual resemblances, and dallies with the echo of a sound.

But he exempted the poems to Fairfax and Cromwell from this praise as being 'dull'. Hartley Coleridge's collections of lives was reprinted under different titles in 1835, 1836 and 1852, and the *Life of Marvell* was reissued separately by two different Hull publishers in 1835. The *Life* lacked the paragraph of criticism quoted above, and contained part of 'An Horatian Ode' instead, together with an appendix of eight poems, though without Dove's comments.

The various printings of the *Life* gave Marvell's name currency, and reviewers (they all reviewed Dove's volume and hence encountered the sixteen poems) further extended, though coolly, his reputation. The *Eclectic Review* remarked in November 1832, with truth, that 'his name has preserved his writings, rather than his writings his name' and felt that his works 'are not worth republishing' in entirety any more than Swift's or Defoes's:

> It must surely have been in his juvenile days, if the poem be really his, that Marvell addressed 'to his coy mistress', the quaint and unequal lines, not quite unworthy of Cowley, in which we are surprised with the following striking thought:
>
> > But at my back I alwaies hear
> > Times winged Chariot hurrying near:
> > And yonder all before us lye
> > Desarts of vast Eternity.

And the reviewer doubted that the 'Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure' was Marvell's since 'the versification seems much too polished, the turns of thought too delicate, and the whole is in too pure a taste for Marvell's day: it must we think, be of later date … It is by far the most beautiful …' His final evaluation was that though 'Marvell might occasionally trifle in poetry' his prose showed him the 'intrepid advocate of freedom'.

Similarly the *Westminster Review*, January 1833, though finding that 'Upon Appleton House' 'displays an intense feeling for the beauties of nature, expressed with a felicity which not unfrequently recalls L'Allegro and Il Penseroso', concluded that 'the admiration of Marvell is to be based, not on his intellectual, but his moral qualities. Neither as a philosopher nor as a poet, does Marvell belong to the first order of great minds'.

Likewise Henry Rogers in the *Edinburgh Review*, January 1844, in a long account of Marvell, belatedly reviewing Dove's *Life*, dealt primarily with the politician and patriot. He offered some critical observations on the satirical and controversial writings, but the lyrics failed to interest him: those he thought best were the non-Marvellian inclusions in Thompson's edition. 'Still, there are unquestionably many of his genuine poems which indicate a rich, though ill-cultivated fancy; and in some few stanzas there is no little grace of expression'.

The reviewers of Dove's *Life*, even more than Dove himself, treated the poems as marginalia to the political and patriotic figure. But slowly this view was dying. In 1836 S. C. Hall had included 'Bermudas', 'Little T. C.', 'To his Coy Mistress' and 'The Nymph Complaining' in his *Book of Gems*, commenting:

> He was not of the highest order, nor perhaps in even a high order, but what he did was genuine. It is sweetness speaking out in sweetness. In the language there is nothing more exquisitely tender than the 'Nymph Complaining for the loss of her Fawn'. Such poems as this and 'the Bermudas' may live, and deserve to live, as long as the longest and the mightiest. Of as real a quality are the majority of the poems of Marvell. In a playful and fantastic expression of tender and voluptuous beauty, they are well nigh unrivalled. His fancy indeed sometimes overmasters him, but it is always a sweet and pleasant mastery. His strong love of the actual at times bursts forth, but his poetry still survives it, and will not be fairly clogged and over-laden with the body corporate.

And ten years later Leigh Hunt, in his anthology *Wit and Humour* (1846), in which he represented Marvell's humour, referred also to the 'devout and beautiful' 'Bermudas' and 'the sweet overflowing fancies' of 'The Nymph Complaining'.

Criticism did not get clogged down, fortunately, in this early Victorian sweetness and exclusion of the 'actual'. G. L. Craik, in his *Sketches of the History of Literature and Learning in England* (1844) finely caught the tonal shifts, the levity and seriousness of Marvell. He was one of the first critics to recognize the sophistication and complexity of Marvell's technique, an important advance on the earlier impressions of 'spontaneity', naturalness, and 'childish simplicity of feeling'. The lyrics, he wrote, are 'eminent both for the delicate bloom of the sentiment and for grace of form.' 'Bermudas'

> is a gem of melody, picturesqueness, and sentiment, nearly without a flaw, and is familiar to every lover of poetry. Not of such purity of execution throughout are the lines entitled 'To his Coy Mistress', but still there are few short poems in the language so remarkable for the union of grace and force, and the easy and flowing transition from a light and playful tone to solemnity, passion, and grandeur. How elegant, and even deferential, is the gay extravagance of the commencement [lines 1–20 quoted]. And then how skilfully managed is the rise from this badinage of courtesy and complement to the strain almost of the ode or the hymn; and how harmonious, notwithstanding its suddenness, is the contrast between the sparkling levity of the prelude and solemn pathos that follows. [lines 21–26] Till, at the end, the pent-up accumulation of passion bursts its floodgates in the noble lines [lines 41–4].

He found 'Little T. C.' 'exquisitely elegant and tuneful': 'certainly neither Carew, nor Waller, nor any other court poet of that day, had produced anything in the same style finer than these lines'. And the lines on *Paradise Lost* 'have throughout almost the dignity, and in parts more than the strength, of Waller'. Craik's perceptive observations were reprinted in the numerous editions (in various forms and under various titles) of his book, a book that became the standard handbook for Civil Service and other examinees throughout the century. In his allocation of space to Marvell (in comment and excerpt, more than to Butler, Cowley, Dryden or Waller) and in his commentary he did much to establish him in the canon of English literature. Though a comparable survey, Henry Hallam's *Introduction to the Literature of Europe* (1839, and often reprinted) remarked simply: 'Marvell wrote sometimes with more taste and feeling that was usual, but his satires are gross and stupid.' Throughout the century, histories of English literature appeared that either ignored Marvell completely, or treated him, usually contemptuously, solely as a satirist.

V

Yet slowly Marvell gathered admirers. Mary Russell Mitford in *Recollections of a Literary Life* (1852) remarked on his 'rich profusion of fancy which almost dazzles the mind', 'his 'earnestness and heartiness', and 'a frequent felicity of phrase, which when once read, fixes itself in the memory and *will* not be forgotten.' In the following year E. P. Hood in *Andrew Marvell, the Wit, Statesman and Poet*, described him as 'a very sweet' poet, 'not in the first

class', though 'had Marvell dedicated his powers to poetry, he must have stood very high'. 'His verses mostly originate in the spontaneous flow of gentle thought and sweet indulgence, and dallying with nature', Hood wrote, and he found them to 'breathe the tranquillity of grove and field'. And a new article in the eighth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1857) by R. C-S. remarked 'besides his controversial and political services, Marvell had written some minor poems of great tenderness, fancy, and beauty, which were deservedly popular. His lyrical stanzas on the sailing of the emigrants for the Bermudas … form one of the finest strains of the Puritan muse.'

Both Miss Mitford and E. P. Hood noted with regret Marvell's sharing the literary vice of his age – conceits. They noted also how little known his poetry was. But in the 1860s he was included in a number of anthologies, pre-eminent among which was F. T. Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury of best songs and Lyrical poems in the English Language* (1862, and much reprinted). By inclusion in this phenomenally popular and influential volume. Marvell was set firmly before the Victorian reading public. In his notes Palgrave offered high praise, finding in Marvell and Milton 'the first noble attempts at pure description of nature, destined in our own age to be continued and equalled'. On 'The Garden' he remarked: 'these truly wonderful verses, which, like 'Lycidas', may be regarded as a test of any readers' insight into the most poetical aspects of Poetry. The general differences between them are vast: but in imaginative intensity, Marvell and Shelley are closely related.' He also included 'An Horatian Ode', remarking that it was 'beyond doubt one of the finest in our language', and 'Bermudas'. Tennyson pressed him to include more and 'greatly pleaded' for 'To his Coy Mistress', but, conscious of Victorian prudishness, Palgrave refused; 'I thought one or two lines too *strong* for this age.'[266] In 1883 he added part of 'The Nymph Complaining', commenting in the notes, 'perhaps no poem in this collection is more delicately fancied, more exquisitely finished', and in 1891 he added 'Little T. C.' Palgrave returned to Marvell in his Oxford lectures, *Landscape in Poetry* (1897), calling him 'one of the most original poets of the Stuart period'.

Palgrave's use of 'The Garden' in *The Golden Treasury* looked forward to Matthew Arnold's touchstones of poetry; but Marvell was not amongst them, nor did Arnold ever discuss him critically. However, in 1861 Arnold sent the French critic Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve a copy of *The Golden Treasury*, and in a covering letter drew attention

[266] C. J. Horne, 'Palgrave's "Golden Treasury"', *English Studies*, 2, n.s. (1949), 60; Kathleen Tillotson, 'Donne's Poetry in the Nineteenth Century', *Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies Presented to Frank Percy Wilson* (London, 1959), 322.

enthusiastically to ‘An Horatian Ode’. ‘Il [Palgrave] a aussi déterré des vrais trésors qui restaient enfouis, et inconnus à presque tout le monde; remarquez surtout une Ode à Andrew Marvell à p. 50. Tout le monde l’ignorait; et cependant qu’elle est belle et forte, cette Ode!’ Three years later, reviewing Hippolyte Taine’s *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1863) which ignored Marvell, Sainte-Beuve himself drew attention to the ode and remarked:

> Jamais le feu de l’enthousiasme pour la chose publique, jamais la grandeur et la terreur qu’inspirent ces grandes sauveurs révolutionnaires, hommes de glaive et d’épée, ne trouvèrent de plus vibrants et de plus vrais accents s’échappant à flots pressés d’une poitrine sincère [lines 25–36 translated].
>
> On sent ici la réalité anglaise et la franchise de ton se contiennent mal sous l’imitation classique, comme elles percent et crèvent en quelque sorte l’enveloppe d’Horace.[267]

In fact ‘An Horatian Ode’ was not as unknown as Arnold believed. Since its publication by Thompson it had been praised by Hazlitt, Hunt in 1837, Mary Russell Mitford, E. P. Hood, the *Biographical Magazine* (1835), the *Eclectic Magazine* (August 1853) and Henry Reed in his *Lectures on the British Poets* (1857) given in 1841. Reviewing W. W. Wilkins’ *Political Ballads of the 17th and 18th Centuries* (1860), Herman Merivale remarked in the *Edinburgh Review*, January 1861, of ‘that magnificent ode of Andrew Marvell’s’:

> This style of political poetry, manly and forcible in a high degree, but often hard, and deficient in natural flow as well as in polish, with a strong tendency to the epigrammatic, continued in fashion while men were much in earnest; but it lost its power when political life became itself commonplace; political verse then became stilted whenever it endeavoured the heroic.

In 1868 two further anthologies represented Marvell. George Macdonald, in *England's Antiphon*, remarked of Marvell, ‘any one of some half dozen of his few poems is to my mind worth all the verse that Cowley ever made. It is a pity he wrote so little.’ Macdonald included ‘On a Drop of Dew’ – ‘surely a lovely fancy of resemblance, exquisitely

[267] Arnold’s letter is printed by T. B. Smart, *Athenaeum*, part DCCCXLIX (3 September 1898), 325; Sainte-Beuve’s review appeared in *Constitutionnel* (6 June 1864), reprinted in his *Nouveaux Lundis*, third edition revised (Paris, 1879), vol. 8, 100–1.

wrought out; an instance of the lighter play of the mystical mind, which yet shadows forth truth' – and 'The Coronet' – a much smaller selection than he gave to Crashaw, Donne, Herbert or Vaughan. R. C. Trench, in his *Household Book of English Poetry*, included 'An Horatian Ode', 'On a Drop of Dew' and 'Eyes and Tears', advising readers to read the latter two or three times to discover 'the depth and riches of meaning which under their unpretending form lie concealed'. In their brief comments. Macdonald and Tench show for the first time in the nineteenth century an awareness that the simplicity of Marvell's expression and treatment covers a depth of subtlety and significance. E. P. Hood had remarked 'the lines on Appleton House are as simple as verses penned in the golden, or mythic age; and rural sounds fall upon our ear, and rural sights move before our eye, awakening only the impression they are disposed to give'. And John Dennis wrote as late as 1872 that Marvell was author of 'a few beautiful poems, which are impregnated with a fine rural flavour'.[268] The rural flavour, the rural sounds are certainly there, but they are only part of the poems. Macdonald and Trench mark the new realization of the allegoric and symbolic nature of Marvell's poetry.

These popular anthologies had put Marvell firmly – though incompletely – before the Victorian reading public, and in July 1869 John Ormsby contributed to the *Cornhill Magazine* an article on Marvell that can be taken as a convenient expression of the current evaluation of Marvell's poetry by the intelligent reader. The satire on Flecknoe, he found

> might easily pass for one of Donne's, so thoroughly has he caught not only the manner and rugged vigorous versification of Donne's satires, but also his very turns of thought, and the passion for elaborate conceits, recondite analogies, and out-of-the-way similitudes … His 'Nymph complaining' … graceful, simple, and tender as the lines are, is not free from these *tours de force* of fancy which disfigure so much of the poetry of that day. Even the lowest, the most verbal form of this forced wit, breaks out … 'Left me his *fawn*, / But took his heart' … On the other hand … 'Bermudas' is as direct, natural and unaffected as a poem of Wordsworth's could be … In 'To his Coy Mistress', the extravagant fancy, that in the graver sort of poetry is a blemish, becomes an ornament, employed as it is to such a kind of *argumentum ad absurdum* to the farthest possible limits, and its effect is heightened by the exquisite assumption

[268] 'English Rural Poetry', *Cornhill Magazine*, 25 (February 1872), 164–76, reprinted in Dennis, *Studies in English Literature* (London,1876). Dennis discusses Marvell again in his *Heroes of Literature* (London,1883), 150–2.

> of gravity in the opening lines … [The poem is] characteristic of Marvell in many ways, but more especially of that peculiarity of his … his trick – if anything so obviously natural and spontaneous can be called a trick – of passing suddenly from a light, bantering, trivial tone, to one of deep feeling, and even … of solemnity … Lightly and playfully as the subject is treated, it suggests thoughts that lead to a graver and more impassioned strain. A few pages further on we find a poem which is in truth only a conceit expanded into a poem, but which in its very flimsiness shows a rare lightness of hand, and neatness of execution. It is a sort of miniature idyll cast in the amœban form, and entitled 'Ametas and Thestylis …' Nothing could be more designedly trifling that this, and yet what a finished elegance there is about it. It is not the highest art, perhaps, but there is a certain antique grace in the workmanship that reminds one somehow, of a cameo or an old engraved gem.

Despite the sensitivity of his analysis – or perhaps because of it – Ormsby could not rank Marvell's poetry 'with the very highest', 'but it unquestionably has high and varied qualities. It makes little pretension to depth or stability, but it abounds in wit and humour, true feeling, melody, and a certain scholarly elegance and delicate fancy.'

VI

Marvell's poetry was now sufficiently well known and appreciated to produce a demand for new editions. Thompson's had appeared practically a hundred years earlier, and most nineteenth-century readers could read Marvell only in anthologies. In 1857 there had been an American edition of his poems, and this was now reprinted in London in 1870 and 1881. In 1872 the first of Alexander Grosart's four volumes of Marvell's works appeared. Although a limited edition – the reprinted American edition did far more to make the poems accessible for the general reader – it was a major force in establishing Marvell. At last there was a full text available for scholars, critics, collectors and students. Grosart ventured few critical comments but his perceptive remark on conceits is a relief from the pages of routine denunciation by his contemporaries.

> And yet beneath the conceit, when you come to look lovingly and lingeringly, you find that it is sprung out of a vital thought or emotion or fancy, precisely as the

> chipped and shapen (misshapen) yews were really rooted in the rich mould, and really nurtured by celestial influences.

The recognition of the conceit's truth to thought or emotion, its psychological realism, was one of those recognitions allowing for the fuller understanding of the metaphysical poets (who Grosart was now editing) which led to their eventual acceptance.

But widespread acceptance still came slowly. W. D. Christie in the *Saturday Review*, 26 April 1873, had scarcely a word for the lyrics in Grosart, but delivered a lengthy attack on the 'loathsome obscurity and virulent malice', the 'extreme grossness and unmitigated filth' of the satires. Naturally he did not quote the offending lines, but he gave line numbers 'for proof of our assertion of the filthy indecency'. Goldwin Smith, in a note to the Marvell selection in volume two of T. H. Ward's *English Poets* (1880), also objected to 'the dirtiness of Restoration thought' and found the lyrics 'often slovenly, sometimes intolerably diffuse … eminently afflicted with the gift of 'wit' or ingenuity' and Marvell only a part-time poet. He was not even a part-time poet for Osmund Airy, whose article in the ninth edition of the *Encylopaedia Britannica* (1883) treated him solely as a politician and controversialist. Edmund Gosse, in *From Shakespeare to Pope* (1885), was cool, though, importantly, for him Marvell is essentially 'seriously-minded' and the 'childish' is an aberrance in him, rather than, as it was for Hartley Coleridge, the saving grace of the conceits. Quoting stanza XL of 'Upon Appleton House' Gosse wrote:

> This is pretty and harmless, but perhaps just because it errs so gently against the canons of style, we ask ourselves how so seriously-minded a man as Marvell could run on in such a childish way. There is a good deal in Marvell that is of this species of wit, graceful and coloured, but almost infantile … His style, when he can put his conceits behind him, is extremely sharp and delicate, with a distinction of phrase that is quite unknown to most of his contemporaries … He is the last of the English romantic poets for several generations, and no one of them all, early or late, has regarded nature with a quicker or more loving attention.

Marvell was at least read, however. Edward Fitzgerald, translator of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, called him 'an old favourite of mine' and remembered how Tennyson found the couplet 'But at my back I alwaies hear / Times winged Chariot hurrying near'

'sublime'.[269] Palgrave recalled how Tennyson had 'special praise' for 'Bermudas' and liked to read aloud 'To his Coy Mistress', and Hallam Tennyson recorded how the poet liked to read aloud 'The Character of Holland' and recall how he had made Thomas Carlyle helpless with laughter at it.[270] As early as 1831 Leigh Hunt had compared Tennyson's poetry with Marvell's,[271] and 'The Nymph Complaining' is echoed in 'Maud' and 'The Princess'.[272] Gerard Manley Hopkins found Marvell 'a most rich and nervous poet'.[273] John Ruskin[274] and Robert Louis Stevenson[275] had some familiarity with Marvell, and both Francis Thompson[276] and Alice Meynell[277], influenced in their own verse by the metaphysical poets, wrote on Marvell briefly in reviews. In Australia the native-born poet Charles Harpur was familiar with Marvell.[278]

With the last decade of the nineteenth century Marvell became established, though he was not feted for another twenty years. A. C. Benson devoted an article to him in *Macmillan's Magazine*, January 1892. He objected to the conceits, the 'monotony' of the subjects, and 'an uncertainty, an incompleteness' and lack of proportion, 'An Horatian Ode' being 'the one instance where Marvell's undoubted genius burned steadily through a whole poem'. But he also commented enthusiastically:

> The strength of Marvell's style lies in its unexpectedness. You are arrested by what has been well called a 'pre-destined' epithet, not a mere otiose addition, but a word which turns a noun into a picture; the 'hook-shouldered' hill 'to abrupter greatness thrust', 'the sugar's uncorrupting oil', 'the vigilant patrol of stars', 'the squatted thorns', the oranges 'like golden lamps in a green night,' the garden's 'fragrant innocence', – these are but a few random instances of a tendency that meets you in

[269] *Letters and Literary Remains of Edward Fitzgerald*, ed. W. A. Wright (London,1889), vol. 1, 337; 2, 133.
[270] *Life and Works of Tennyson* (London,1889), vol. 4, 99–100, 308–9.
[271] *Tatler*, 2 (26 February 1831), 593.
[272] *Notes and Queries*, 10 (July 1963), 264–5; (October 1963) 385.
[273] *Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon*, ed. C. C. Abbott (London,1935), 23.
[274] Oswald Doughty, *A Victorian Romantic* (London,1949), 324.
[275] Stevenson, *Letters*, ed. Sidney Colvin (London,1899), vol. 2, 214.
[276] On Marvell's influence on Thompson see J. C. Reid, *Francis Thompson Man and Poet* (London,1959), 67, 99, and Everard Meynell, *Life of Francis Thompson* (London,1926), 123. Thompson reviewed Augustine Birrell's *Andrew Marvell* in *Academy*, 69 (23 September 1905), 976–7.
[277] Alice Meynell represented Marvell in her anthology *The Flower of the Mind* (London,1897) and wrote on him in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (14 July 1897), 3.
[278] Leon Cantrell, 'Marvell and Harpur', *Australian Literary Studies*, 6, 1 (May 1973).

> every poem. Marvell had in fact the qualities of a consummate artist, and only needs to repress his luxuriance and to confine his expansiveness.

With the inclusion of G. A. Aitken's edition of Marvell in the Muses Library in 1892, the poet was at last conveniently accessible in a newly edited text. The reviewer in the *Athenaeum*, 3 September 1892, thought Marvell 'monstrously overrated' and declared 'the *Golden Treasury* contains all of his work that is worth more than a single reading.' But with E. K. Chambers' review in the *Academy*, 17 September 1892, acceptance was almost complete. Chambers heard in Marvell 'the music of Puritanism – the Puritanism of Spenser and Sidney, not uncultivated, not ungracious, not unsensuous even, but always with the same dominant note in it, of moral strength and moral purity.' Natural sweetness had now been replaced by moral strength and purity, setting the tone for much of the twentieth-century commentary on Marvell. Chambers also marks an important stage in the acceptance of the conceit. 'Upon Appleton House', he wrote,

> shows him at his best – and at his worst, in the protracted conceit, whereby a garden, its flowers and its bees, are likened to a fort with a garrison. And here I am minded to enter a plea against the indiscriminate condemnation of conceits in poetry. After all, a conceit is only an analogy, a comparison, a revealing of likeness in things dissimilar, and therefore of the very essence of poetic imagination. Often it illumines, and where it fails, it is not because it is a conceit, but because it is a bad conceit; because the thing compared is not beautiful in itself, or because the comparison is not flashed upon you, but worked out with such tedious elaboration as to be 'merely fantastical'. Many of Marvell's conceits are, in effect, bad; the well-known poem 'On a Drop of Dew', redeemed though it is by the last line and a half, affords a terrible example. But others are shining successes.

In 1900 Marvell was included in *The Oxford Book of English Verse* edited by Arthur Quiller-Couch, who also edited a brief volume of Marvell's lyrics in the Oxford 'Select English Classics'. H. C. Beeching's article on 'The Lyrical Poems of Andrew Marvell', *National Review*, July 1901, is a useful study, but its significance lies not so much in the sound observations it makes, but in the workmanlike, almost routine manner of proceeding. The discoveries have been made; analysis and classification now follow. Augustine Birrell's

volume *Andrew Marvell* in the 'English Men of Letters' series (1905), though containing practically no critical observations, nonetheless marks the final admission of Marvell to the body of standard authors.

VII

Marvell's reputation, along with that of the other metaphysical poets, had importantly developed in the United States during the nineteenth century. Joseph E. Duncan notes that the American interest in the metaphysicals 'was relatively free from English influence. American critics generally appreciated the metaphysicals' transcendent qualities, their hard core of thought, and the union of body, mind and soul reflected in their poetry.'[279]

Marvell's early reputation as a defender of liberty persisted in America also. In 1773 his name was taken as a pseudonym in two pamphlets in a controversy over the site of a market in Philadelphia.[280] But his poetry was well known early in the nineteenth century. Ralph Waldo Emerson was reading Marvell in the 1820s. He wrote in his journal for 1828:

> Is not the age gone by of the great splendour of English poetry, and will it not be impossible for any age soon to vie with the pervading ethereal poesy of Herbert, Shakespeare, Marvell, Herrick, Milton, Ben Jonson; at least to represent anything like their peculiar form of ravishing verse? It is the head of human poetry … I have for them an affectionate admiration I have for nothing else. They set me on speculations. They move my wonder at myself. They suggest the great endowment of the spiritual man. They open glimpses of the heaven that is in the intellect.

Marvell features in Emerson's reading lists for 1838 and 1842, and Emerson's library included an annotated copy of the 1857 Boston edition of the poems. He represented Marvell in his anthology *Parnassus* (Boston, 1877) and, as Oliver Wendell Holmes noted in 1885, was influenced by Marvell in his own verse.[281]

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[279] Joseph E. Duncan, *The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry* (Minneapolis, 1959), 60.
[280] Caroline Robbins, letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 December 1958, 737.
[281] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals* (Boston, 1914), vol. 2, 253–4; Olive Wendell Holmes, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1885), 21; Walter Harding, *Emerson's Library* (London, 1967), 185; Pierre Legouis, *André Marvell* (Paris, 1928), 236; Norman A. Brittin, 'Emerson and the Metaphysical Poets', *American Literature*, 8 (March 1936), 1–21.

In the *Southern Literary Messenger*, August 1836, Edgar Allan Poe, reviewing S. C. Hall's *Book of Gems*, wrote a fine account of 'The Nymph Complaining', 'a beautiful poem, abounding in sweet pathos, in soft and gentle images, in the most exquisitely delicate imagination':

> How truthful an air of deep lamentation hangs here upon every gentle syllable! It pervades all. It comes over the sweet melody of the words, over the gentleness and grace which we fancy in the little maiden herself, – even over the half-playful, half petulant air with which she lingers on the beauties and good qualities of her favorite, like the cool shadow of a summer cloud over a bed of lilies and violets, and 'all sweet flowers'. The whole thing is redolent with poetry of the very loftiest order. It is positively crowded with nature and with pathos. Every line is an idea, conveying either the beauty and playfulness of the faun, or the artlessness of the maiden, or the love of the maiden, or her admiration, or her grief, or the fragrance, and sweet warmth, and perfect appropriateness of the little nest-like bed of lilies and roses, which the faun devoured as it lay upon them, and could scarcely be distinguished from them by the once happy little damsel who went to seek her pet with an arch and rosy smile upon her face. Consider the treat variety of *truth* and delicate thought in the few lines we have quoted – [lines 63–92] the *wonder* of the maiden at the fleetness of her favorite – the 'little silver feet' – the faun challenging his mistress to the race, 'with a pretty skipping grace', running on before, and then, with head turned back, awaiting her approach only to fly from it again – can we not distinctly perceive all these things? The exceeding vigor, too, and beauty of the line, '*And trod as if on the four winds*', which are vividly apparent when we regard the artless nature of the speaker and the *four feet* of the favorite – *one for each wind*. Then the garden of 'my own', so overgrown – entangled – with lilies and roses as to be 'a little wilderness' – the faun loving to be there and there '*only*' – the maiden seeking it 'where it *should* lie', and not being able to distinguish it from the flowers until 'itself would rise' – the lying among the lilies 'like a bank of lilies' – the loving to 'fill' itself with roses, 'And its pure virgin limbs to fold / In whitest sheets of lilies cold' and these things being its 'chief' delights – and then the pre-eminent beauty and naturalness of the concluding lines – whose very outrageous hyperbole and absurdity only renders them the more true to nature and to propriety, when we consider the innocence, the artlessness, the

> enthusiasm, the passionate grief, and more passionate admiration of the bereaved child – '*Had it lived long it would have been / Lilies without – roses within.*'

It is a distinguished piece of criticism in its elucidatory sympathy and its enthusiasm. Poe shows a far greater feeling for Marvell than any of the earlier, or the contemporary, critics of Marvell in Britain.

In the late 1840s John Greenleaf Whittier wrote an essay on Marvell in the *National Era* which was reprinted in his *Old Portraits and Modern Sketches* (Boston, 1850). The image of Marvell as 'one of the inflexible defenders of English liberty, sowers of the seed, the fruits of which we are now reaping' naturally made an appeal to this great opponent of slavery. But Whittier also responded to 'his merits as a poet, by no means inconsiderable':

> His poems, written in the 'snatched leisure' of an active political life, bear marks of haste, and are very unequal. In the midst of passages of pastoral description worthy of Milton himself, feeble lines and hackneyed phrases occur. His 'Nymph lamenting the Death of her Faun' is a finished and elaborate piece, full of grace and tenderness. 'Thoughts in a Garden' will be remembered by the quotations of that exquisite critic, Charles Lamb … One of his longer poems, 'Appleton House', contains passages of admirable description, and many not unpleasing conceits … There is a splendid Ode to Cromwell – a worthy companion of Milton's glorious sonnet – which is not generally known, and which we transfer entire to our pages. Its simple dignity, and the melodious flow of versification, commend themselves more to our feelings than its eulogy of war. It is energetic and impassioned, and probably affords a better idea of the author, as an actor in the stirring drama of his time, than the 'soft Lydian airs' of the poems we have quoted.

'An Horatian Ode', 'The Garden', 'Upon Appleton House', 'Bermudas', 'Eyes and Tears' and 'Climb at Court' were the poems quoted, importantly making Marvell accessible as a poet – though it is on the defender of liberty theme that Whittier concludes: 'His memory is the inheritance of Americans as well as Englishmen. His example commends itself in an especial manner to the legislators of our Republic.'

Marvell became available in America not only in English anthologies but in an increasing number of volumes published within the United States. As early as 1857 an edition

of Marvell's poems was published in Boston – fifteen years before any nineteenth-century English edition. It contained an abridgement of Henry Rogers' essay, and some original editorial comment:

> Marvell possessed wit so sportful and airy, yet at the same time so recondite, that it is hard to find anywhere an instance in which the Court, the Tavern and the scholar's study are blended with such Corinthian justness of measure … His mind presents the rare combination of wit with moral sense, by which the one is rescued from scepticism and the other from prosing. His poems form the synthesis of Donne and Butler.

The same year he was represented in R. W. Griswold's *Sacred Poets of England and America,* and he continued to be printed throughout the century – in *Favorite Odes and Poems by Collins, Dryden and Marvell* (Boston, 1875), *The Poetical Works of Milton and Marvell* (Boston, 1878) and later collections.

That Marvell's were among the 'favorite' poems suggests his popularity. Certainly he was known to Nathaniel Hawthorne, who took the last line of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) from 'The Unfortunate Lover'[282] and to Herman Melville, who alluded to 'Upon Appleton House' in the first chapter of *Billy Budd* (1891).[283] Emily Dickinson shows some similarities of image and tone to Marvell, though the influence was probably indirect. While among the academic establishment Marvell's reputation was also high. James Russell Lowell wrote in an essay on Dryden in 1870:

> Marvell's 'Horatian Ode', the most truly classic in our language, is worthy of its theme. The same poet's *Elegy* on Cromwell, in parts noble, and everywhere humanly tender, is worth more than all Carlyle's biography as a witness to the gentler qualities of the hero, and of the deep affection that stalwart nature could inspire in hearts of truly masculine temper. As it is little known, a few verses of it may be quoted to show the difference between grief that thinks of its object and grief that thinks of its rhymes.

[282] R. L. Brant, 'Hawthorne and Marvell', *American Literature*, 30 (November 1958), 366.
[283] E. E. Duncan-Jones in Pierre Legouis, *Andrew Marvell* (1965), 236n; Michael Milgate, *English Studies*, 49 (February 1968), 47–50.

VIII

The belief that the metaphysical poets were 'rediscovered' by T. S. Eliot – and by Herbert Grierson's anthology *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century* (1921) which Eliot reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 October 1921, – has now been convincingly qualified. We can see a gradual acceptance of the metaphysicals throughout the nineteenth century, accelerating with Grosart's editions of Cowley, Crashaw, Donne, Herbert and Marvell in the 1870s and culminating with Grierson's edition of Donne in 1912. With Marvell, Eliot was making no 'discovery' but dealing with a figure already established in the literary cultures of America, where he had been educated, and England, where he had settled. Yet Eliot's importance must not, in reaction, be underrated. Marvell's acceptance had not become total; objecting to his inclusion in the English Men of Letters series, the *Times Literary Supplement* commented, 22 September 1905 that 'Marvell was only in a limited sense an English Man of Letters'; 'amongst the poets Marvell is the thinnest end of the wedge yet admitted'.

Details of Eliot's essay on Marvell can be seen to have been prefigured. Leigh Hunt's observation that 'Marvell unites wit with earnestness', the 'combination of wit with moral sense' remarked in the 1857 Boston edition and in E. K. Chambers' review of the 1892 Muses Library edition, led to Eliot. The gradual acceptance of the conceit – by Hartley Coleridge, Grosart and Chambers – the realization that it 'sprung out of a vital thought or emotion or fancy' and in 'revealing of likeness in things dissimilar' was 'of the very essence of poetic imagination' again point to Eliot's acceptance and understanding of conceits. And his acceptance of the colloquial rhythms, the deliberate metrical 'irregularities' of the metaphysicals had also been prefigured. Indeed Isaac Rosenberg, in a letter written in 1917, just before his death in the trenches of World War I, wished Marvell's lines had been stronger:

> Regular rhythms I do not like much, but of course it depends on where the stress and accent are laid. I think there is nothing finer than the vigorous opening of Lycidas for music; yet it is regular. Now I think if Andrew Marvell had broken up his rhythms more he would have been considered a terrific poet. As it is I like his poem urging his mistress to love because they have not a thousand years to love in and he can't afford to wait. (I forget the name of the poem) well I like it more than Lycidas.

But although elements of Eliot's criticism can be found in earlier writers (and J. E. Duncan usefully indicates forerunners to Eliot) they are elements less emphasized in their original contexts. It is in the selection and emphasis of particular characteristics as the salient characteristics of metaphysical poetry that Eliot is distinctive. His influence was immense, and, as Frank Kermode has remarked, he introduced a fresh critical terminology whose use is not yet exhausted. [284]

Herbert Grierson had represented Marvell in his immensely influential anthology *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1921) and commented, 'apart from Milton he is the most interesting personality between Donne and Dryden, and at his best a finer poet than either.' Eliot's 1921 valuation was similarly high, and though he qualified it in his review of Marvell's poems in *Nation and Athenaeum*, 29 September 1923, the high valuation persisted. J. B. Broadbent in *Poetic Love* (1964) was one of the very few critics to question it.

From Eliot's emphasis on the metaphysicals as a major force in English poetry, other critics soon developed a system. George Williamson in *The Donne Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1930) developed from Eliot's observations a 'tradition', in which Marvell is placed in the line of Donne; in England, F. R. Leavis's 'Line of Wit' similarly developed from Eliot: 'The line, then, runs from Ben Jonson (and Donne) through Carew and Marvell to Pope.' Geoffrey Walton's *From Metaphysical to Augustan* (1955) in its turn developed Leavis's line.[285] Marvell also attracted the attention of William Empson in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), possibly the most significant and fruitful English critical work of the first half of the twentieth century. In America Cleanth Brooks followed a similar approach, seeing the comprehension within a poem of conflicting attitudes as a characteristic feature of the metaphysicals. The brief observations of these two critics provided a valuable stimulation in Marvell criticism. Both later wrote essays on Marvell; Empson with 'Marvell's 'Garden'', *Scrutiny*, I (1932) and Brooks with 'Marvell's 'Horatian Ode'', *English Institute Essays 1946* (1947). More traditional, more conservative in critical method was Pierre Legouis's *André Marvell* (Paris, 1928, revised, abridged and translated, Oxford 1965, second edition 1968).

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[284] *The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg*, ed. G. Bottomley and D. Harding (London, 1937), 317, noted in Geoffrey Walton, *From Metaphysical to Augustan* (London, 1955); Andrew Marvell, *Selected Poetry*, ed. Frank Kermode (London, 1967) viii; Frank Kermode, 'Dissociation of Sensibility', *Kenyon Review*, 19 (Spring 1957), 169–94.

[285] F. R. Leavis, *Scrutiny*, 4 (December 1935), 249, reprinted in Leavis, *Revaluation* (London, 1936). A shorter version of Geoffrey Walton's discussion of Marvell appeared in *Politics and Letters*, 1 (Summer 1948), 22–35.

The first thorough and comprehensive survey or Marvell's life, writings and reputation, it established a basis and context from which criticism could develop. To this, and to H. M. Margoliouth's two-volume edition of Marvell's poems and letters (Oxford 1927; revised 1952) modern scholars are indebted.

For a long time Eliot, Empson, Brooks and Leavis provided the main impetus in critical discussions of Marvell. The *explication de texte*, the practical criticism, the close reading favoured by the American New Critics and their British counterparts, was a method particularly suitable for lyric poetry. It is shown at its most rewarding in the essays by Empson and Brooks mentioned above, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Pen Warren on 'The Definition of Love' in *Understanding Poetry* (New York, 1938), Laurence Lerner on 'An Horatian Ode' in *Interpretations*, edited by John Wain (1955) and John E. Hardy on 'The Coronet' in his *The Curious Frame: Seven Poems in Text and Context* (1962). But it is not an exercise that can be indefinitely repeated.

Moreover, judgements of the uniqueness, the original vividness, the distinctiveness of the metaphysicals were soon countered by an array of qualifying scholarly studies. The 'modernity' of the metaphysical poets, much emphasized in the 1920s and 1930s was especially challenged. Rosemund Tuve in *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (1947) was at pains to demonstrate that the metaphysicals were less innovators than heirs to tradition; and Louis Martz's *The Poetry of Meditation* (1954) examined a particular tradition, the Catholic meditation, which he demonstrated to be a significant structuring force on much of what had been thought distinctively 'metaphysical'. Both these studies made important reference to Marvell. At the same time, a number of shorter studies attempted to establish the genres to which Marvell's poems can be attached. M. C. Bradbrook's 'Marvell and the Poetry of Rural Solitude' was one of the earliest of such studies and Frank Kermode's 'The Argument of Marvell's 'The Garden'' a later example.[286] Christopher Hill's Marxist approach in 'Society and Andrew Marvell' was one of the first attempts to read the lyrics in political and social terms.[287] John M. Wallace in *Destiny His Choice* (1968) attempted to redefine the political position of Marvell and relate it to his poetry.

The development of these approaches led, of course, to some striking clashes of interpretation. The confrontation of the critic and scholar (historical, iconographical,

[286] M. C. Bradbrook, 'Marvell and the Poetry of Rural Solitude', *Review of English Studies*, 17 (January 1941), 17–46; Frank Kermode, 'The Argument of Marvell's "The Garden"', *Essays in Criticism*, 2 (1952).
[287] Christopher Hill, 'Society and Andrew Marvell,' *Modern Quarterly*, 4 (1946), reprinted in Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (London, 1958).

rhetorical) became a recurrent feature of Marvell studies. It can be seen in the debates between Cleanth Brooks and Douglas Bush over 'An Horatian Ode', between F. W. Bateson and F. R. Leavis over 'A Dialogue Between Soul and Body', and in the perpetual discussions of 'vegetable love' in 'To his Coy Mistress.'[288]

The volume of criticism on Marvell developed considerably through the twentieth century. Both Pierre Legouis and Frank Kermode valuably pricked some of the absurdities of over-ingenious and unhelpful 'interpretation'.[289] The 'simplicity' once remarked upon is a quality rarely noted or looked for by modern critics, and though they note Marvell's qualities of lightness, grace and wit, few have achieved these themselves. Fortunately Marvell seems as well able to survive the weight of commentary as his earlier neglect. His elusiveness, his obliqueness, his ironic, wry detachment save him from firm critical categorization. After the most formidable of critical accounts, we can turn again to his poetry and find it as untouched, as evasive, as enigmatic as ever.

The major source for any account of the reputation of and development of critical interest in Marvell is the final chapter and bibliography of Pierre Legouis, *André Marvell; poète, puritain, patriote, 1623–1678* (Paris, 1928) and the additional information in the abridgement and translation of this study, *Andrew Marvell: Poet, Puritan, Patriot* (Oxford, 1965, 1968). My debt to Professor Legouis's exhaustive researches has been immense. I am indebted, also, for references to additional material to Joseph E. Duncan's valuable study *The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry* (Minneapolis, 1959), to additional notes by John Butt to J. B. Leishman, *The Art of Marvell's Poetry* (1966), and to John Carey. I am very grateful indeed to E. E. Duncan-Jones, H. Neville Davies, R. M. Cummings and John D. Peacock for additional unpublished information.

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[288] Cleanth Brooks, 'Marvell's "Horatian Ode"', *English Institute Essays 1946* (New York, 1947); Douglas Bush, 'Marvell's "Horatian Ode"', *Sewanee Review*, 60 (1952); F. W. Bateson and F. R. Leavis, '"A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body": a debate', from 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' in F. W. Bateson, *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (London, 1966).

[289] Pierre Legouis, 'Marvell and the New Critics', *Review of English Studies*, 8 (November 1957), 382–9; Frank Kermode, 'Marvell Transprosed', *Encounter*, 27 (November 1966), 77–84. There is another survey by Bruce King, 'In Search of Marvell', *Review of English Literature*, 8 (October 1967), 31–41.

Marvell's Reputation for Patriotism and Probity

Throughout the eighteenth century, and well into the nineteenth century, Andrew Marvell's reputation rested as much, and often more, on his patriotism and political probity, as on his poetry. Pierre Legouis has documented the major references to Marvell in his *Andre Marvell: poète, patriote, puritain* (1928) and in the revised and abridged English version of this study, *Andrew Marvell: Poet, Puritan, Patriot* (1965; revised 2nd edition, 1968). The following items supplement those in Legouis.

In 'In Praise of FRUGALITY' by 'R. Freeman', reprinted from the *London Journal* No. 978 (13 May 1738) in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, viii (May 1738), 255, occurs the following passage:

> *Andrew Marvel*, one of the most disinterested Patriots in the Reign of *Charles* II by managing a very narrow Patrimony, kept himself above Corruption: and there is a Story of him, which, tho' it may seem to be but ordinary, deserves to be everlastingly remembered: He dined usually at a great Ordinary in the *Strand*, where having eat heartily of boiled Beef, and some roast Pigeons and Asparagus, he drank his Pint of Port; and on the coming in of the Reckoning, taking a Piece out of his Pocket, and holding it between his Thumb and Finger, *Gentlemen*, said he, *who would let himself out for Hire while he can have such a Dinner for half a Crown?*

An anonymous poem 'The Patriot', reprinted from the *Westminster Journal* (19 August 1749) in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, xix (September 1749), 422, amongst its list of patriots contained the couplet

> To MARVELL, steadfast in his borough's pay
> Each BRITON owes a tributary lay.

Marvell was glossed not as a poet but:

> Andrew Marvell, *Esq; memb. of parl. temp.* Cha. II. *for Hull; being poor he received the* wages *appointed for service in Parliament, and was proof against all ministerial attacks.*

There was no article on Marvell in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, but there is an entry in the second edition (1780). It deals largely with his political probity in refusing £1,000 from Charles's treasurer, Lord Danby; and as soon as Danby had finally gone, having to borrow a guinea from a friend. This article was reprinted in the succeeding editions up to and including the seventh (1842), unchanged except for minor details in the brief bibliography. From the third edition (1791) onwards, 'Poems' were mentioned in the bibliographies. But it was not until the new article in the eighth edition (1857) that any poems were mentioned in the text.[290]

Sir John Hawkins in his *Life of Dr Samuel Johnson* prefaced to Johnson's *Works* (1787) mentions Marvell's probity (I, 395n.). Discussing Johnson's acceptance of a pension in 1762, Hawkins appended a footnote:

> Some of Johnson's friends, and all his enemies, would have been glad had he imitated the conduct of Andrew Marvell, who, in the reign of Cha. II. upon the offer of any post under the government that would please him, and of a thousand pounds in money, made him a message from the king by the earl of Danby at a time when he wanted a guinea, refused both. But Johnson had no reason to practice such self-denial. Marvell, to be grateful, must have deserted his principles, and acquiesced in the measures of a corrupt court. Johnson, on the contrary, was in no danger, during such a reign as is the present, of being required to make a sacrifice of his conscience, and, being thus at liberty, he accepted the bounty of his sovereign.

The Danby story provided the material for an 'Anecdote of Andrew Marvell; in *La Belle Assemblée or Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine*, xxi n.s. (May 1820) 199.

> Charles II, having met with Marvell in a private company, found his manners so agreeable, that he could not imagine a man of such complacency to possess inflexible honesty. He accordingly sent his Lord Treasurer Danby to him next day; who, after mounting several dark staircases, found the author in a very mean lodging, and

290 The editor of *Notes and Queries*, J. C.Maxwell, added these further items: There is an anecdotal entry, based on Cooke and ignoring the poetry, in Flloyd's *Bibliotheca Biographica* (1760). One amusing *obiter dictum* is in the *European Magazine*, 8 (December 1785), 438, which in the course of mentioning Edward Thompson's attempt to father on Marvell poems by Addison, Watts and Mallet, calls Marvell 'a wretched poetaster'.

> preferred him a mark of his Majesty's consideration. Marvell assured the Lord Treasurer that he was not in want of the King's assistance, and humorously illustrated his independence by calling his servant to witness that he had dined for three days successively on a shoulder of mutton; and having given a rational and dignified explanation of his motives to the minister, went to a friend and borrowed a guinea.

Bernard Barton in his ode 'To Patriotism' included Marvell amongst his patriots *(Metrical Effusions*, Woodbridge, 1812, 143). It is as a patriot, not as a poet, that Marvell is noted in the 'Compendium of the History of Cambridgeshire' in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, lxxxvi (ii) (November 1816), 419. In the 'Biography' section is the entry Marvel, Andrew, commentator of the Creed, father of the Patriot, Meldrith, (drowned 1640).

Similarly, an article on St. Giles in the Fields in *The Gentleman's Magazine* lxxxvii (ii) (August 1817), 114, records:

> It has a few good monuments; in its North aisle is a black marble slab of that tried and independent patriot *Andrew Marvel*, on which is inscribed a brief history of his life.
>
> I read it many years ago, when it was readable; it is now scarcely so.

It is in his public capacity that Marvell makes a brief appearance in Horatio Smith's novel *Brambletye House, or Cavaliers and Roundheads* (1826) where he is seen as Milton's amanuensis (I. 213–15). His poems, indeed, are mentioned as (anachronistically) filling the bookcase alongside other seventeenth-century writers.

Marvell's name was taken for a poem printed in 1740 'for H. Goreham at the King's-Arms, next the Leg-Tavern in Fleet-street', *Satirical and Panegyrical Instructions to William Hogarth, Painter, on Admiral Vernon's Taking Porto Bello With Six Ships of War Only*. By A. Marvell Junior.[291]

Marvell's name was taken for the authorship of a pamphlet published in London in 1812: *The Crisis or, the Delicate Investigation*, by Andrew Marvell, Redivivus. There is no copy in the British Museum, but the Bodleian Library possesses one, shelf-marked 22871 d. 187. It is likely that Marvell's name inspired the pseudonym Peter Marvell attached to the

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291 See M. T. Osborne, *Advice-To-A-Painter Poems 1633–1856, An Annotated Finding List* (Austin,1949), 70–1.

poem *Oxford Aphrodisiacal Licences* (Oxford, 1821). The Bodleian catalogue records the name as a pseudonym. (Shelf-mark: Oxon 4° 119.) The final couplet

> I am no traitor: what but loyal zeal
> Could move me thus to urge the public weal?

suggests a memory of Marvell's reputation as a patriot.[292]

292 Reprinted, 'Oxford Aphrodisiacal Licences by "Peter Marvell"', *Oxford Magazine*, 18 October 1968, 6–7.

Richard Flecknoe's *Diarium*: A Source for Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*

The generally accepted models for the manner and form of Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* are Cervantes, Sir John Mennis, James Smith and Scarron.[293] These same four names, together with Aristophanes, Plautus and the author of *La Secchia Rapita*, are mentioned by Richard Flecknoe in the prefatory 'Entrance into Style' of his *The Diarium, or Joumall: Divided into 12 Jornadas in Burlesque Rhyme or Drolling Verse* (1656) as models possibly to be followed. An account of a twelve-day journey through England, *The Diarium* has no plot or coherent action, but offers a series of observations on locales and on characters – fishwives, bargemen, preachers and so on – in a genially satiric, scurrilous way. It captures an aspect of the everyday life of the country, and is a fine repository of colloquial phrases, traditional proverbs, and allusions to rural customs. It is the milieu of the action of *Hudibras.* And the 'burlesque rhyme' of octosyllabic couplets remarkably foreshadows the manner of *Hudibras.*

The description of Tony, a Kaffir brought to England and converted to an appearance of Christianity (which vanishes immediately on his return to Africa) has the comic, often multisyllabic, rhymes, the movement with its harsh enjambments, the contemptuous tone in describing religious enthusiasts (with the implication that their Christianity is only a superficial convenience) that we find in Butler.

> For o're a Bible he would foam
> The whole day long, let him alone.
> Who strait in reading Holy writ
> Became a mighty Proselite,
> And a notable doe he kept there,
> With interpreting of Scripture:
> O'th' *Pocalyps* he knew each letter,
> And could expound it no man better;
> Had still in mouth *Phares* and *Techel*,
> And could guesse shrewdly at *Ezekiel;*
> He read whole Genealogies,

[293] Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, ed. John Wilders (Oxford, 1967), xxxiii. All quotations from *Hudibras* are from this edition.

And counted ancient Patriarchs wise,
That they so many wives did keep,
And so many flocks of sheep:
Story of *David* and *Bersheba*,
He knew, and how with her he lay,
And was therewith much edifi'd,
Then he would cite ye text beside
Out of *Matthew*, *Luke* and *Paul*,
As if th'ad been *hail fellows all.*
For turning up when white o'th'eye,
He could do it excellently;
And through the nose too, speak for need,
When he thanks gave, or did read,
Having in every thing right twang,
Of the pure and holy Gang. (p. 52)

There is the same nasal intonation that Butler notes amongst enthusiastic preachers (cf. *Hudibras*, I. i. 509ff), and Tony's skill in Biblical interpretation is comparable to that of Hudibras himself (I. i. 27–186). The ironic tension between endorsive adjectives and contemptuous noun – 'pure and holy gang' foreshadows Butler's similar capturing of the contradictions of the puritans.

For he was of that stubborn Crew
Of Errant Saints, whom all men grant
To be the true Church *Militant:*
Such as do build their Faith upon
The holy Text of *Pike* and *Gun*;
Decide all Controversies by
Infallible *Artillery*;
And prove their Doctrine Orthodox
By Apostolick *Blows* and *Knocks* … (I. i. 190–8)

This dislike of Butler's for the nonconformists is captured in Flecknoe's account of the Anabaptist minister:

> A *Dipper* of the newest cut,
> Who 'had Congregation got,
> So ridiculous, as I
> Cannot but describe it t'ye. (p. 15)

The minister, the place, the congregation are treated with a Hudibrastic contempt. There is a relishing of the cant of devotion – 'edified', 'proselite', an appreciation of its potential for burlesque rhyme – 'pickle' / 'conventicle' (cf. *Hudibras*, I. ii. 437–8) and a delight in the tonal contrasts of them and of the formal, polysyllabic 'cupillo' and 'physiognomies' with the simplicities of 'shit' and 'bellyache'. Describing the building, Flecknoe writes:

> Above it had no *Cupillo*
> Though wind from thence through tiles did blow.
> Nor *Mosaick* pavement more
> Than father *Adam*'s earthen floor;
> Window it had for to give light
> To any that had eyes to see't.
> And at the higher end a *Pulpit*
> That would not dung if it were full shit;
> *Garden of cowcumbers* in pickle.
> For half the holy Conventicle,
>
> 2. For Auditors you by their features,
> Would imagin them *Gods* creatures;
> But by physiognomies, they had
> The sillyest ones as ere he made,
> Each one there looking so demurely,
> As they had got the *Colique* surely,
> Or some such symptoms had did make
> Men look as th'had the belly-ake.

(pp. 15–14 – numeration reversed)

Nor is Butler's brand of self-consciously literary parody lacking. The division of the poem into twelve jornadas is a burlesquing of epic structure. And Jornada VI opens:

> And now *Aurora* blushing red,
> Came stealing out of *Titans* bed,
> Whilst the *hours* that swiftly run,
> Harnass'd the horses of the Sun.
> Now *Chantecleer* with stretcht-out wings,
> The glad approach of *Phoebus* sings,
> While *Bats* and *Owles*, and birds of night
> Were all confounded, put to flight.
> All which is onely for to say
> In *Poets language*, that 'twas day,
> Might have been sed in word or two
> As well, without all this ado,
> But that't does please Master of Schooles
> To render all their Schollers fooles,
> By canting language signifies
> Nothing at all unto the wise. (p. 28)

The mocking of the traditional epic dawn description, the scoffing attitude to poetic convention are similar to Butler's famous burlesquing of the dawn image:

> The Sun had long since in the Lap
> Of *Thetis*, taken out his *Nap*,
> And like a *Lobster* boyl'd, the *Morn*
> From *black* to *red* began to turn. (II. ii. 29–32)

The comically grudging attitude to poetic convention – Flecknoe later remarks on 'Poets wonted eloquence, / Writing one blow with their pen / Longer then they're fighting ten' (VII, p. 34) is similar to Butler's grudging observance of the convention of the invocation (I. i.

629–58); and this latter feature is itself comparable to Flecknoe's prefatory debate with himself of '*whose Genius shall I invite? / Or of whose Muse invoke the favour*' and decision to follow only himself.

Parody is a feature of the burlesque of both poems. Butler has Hudibras woo the Lady in an absurd version of a lover's protestations:

> Quoth he, to bid me not to *love*,
> Is to forbid my *Pulse* to move,
> My *Beard* to grow, my *Ears* to prick up,
> Or (when I'm in a fit) to hickup;
> Command me to piss out the Moon,
> And 'twill as easily be done. (II. i. 343–8)

Flecknoe offers a Hymn of the Dutch to turnips:

> *Turnips* they even account their God,
> Singing *Hymnes* unto its praise,
> As Ethnicks did in antient dayes.
> 'O Divine *Turnep*, thou and *Butter*,
> 'How often have you made us squtter?
> 'Dunging our *Land* with what comes from us,
> 'Till't even becomes a *Land of Promise.*
> 'Thou art our Apple, raw we eat,
> 'And roasted, thou art all our meat;
> 'Thou art our sweetmeats which we strait
> 'Convert into *swines marmalet*,
> 'Whence th'art (to end) our Indies too,
> 'As *Goldfinders* full well do know.' (p. 30)

Flecknoe provides a defence in terms of literary theory for the recurrent scatological note, in the prefatory 'To the Reader' that would apply, too, to Butler's procedure:

> That I use some broad words sometimes, 'tis but conform to the pattern I imitate: *Brughel* representing, without any dishonesty, here a *Boor* shiting, there a *Boorinne* pissing, to render the vulgar more ridiculous (are properly the subject of ridiculousness) and whose follies, abuses, and vices, are properly the subject of Satyre.

The broad words are only one aspect of the appropriate burlesque style. Like Butler, Flecknoe consistently uses 'imagery from the most commonplace objects in daily use', and he 'crowds his poem with similes from animals of 'low' associations' – animal images that are often proverbial in nature; as with Butler there is a noticeable 'affinity of his verse to famous proverbs.'[294] *The Diarium* brims over with commonplace objects, animals, and proverbs. Both as objects and as metaphoric references we continually encounter ducking stools, the 'dancing Dog in doublet', cats that 'alwaies light upon their pats', '*Paddocks* after shower of Rain', the 'laxative *Turnep*', rats gnawing candles and being rhymed away, draymen, chilblains and kibes, hobnails and ploughshares, bowling greens, 'green Gowns, and Cakes and Ale', ballad makers, meacocks, Robin Goodfellow, Puck, fairies and hobgoblins, 'dog with squib at taile', pots and pipkins, and proverbs like 'Who touches pitch shall be defil'd', 'The more they stirre, the more they stink', 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' and so on. Published six years before part I of *Hudibras*, *The Diarium* is a prototype for many of the effects Butler was to employ. It has claims to be considered as one of the possible sources of *Hudibras.*

[294] The quotations are from Ian Jack's discussion of *Hudibras* in *Augustan Satire* (Oxford, 1952), 31, 32, 20. I have discussed Butler's manner further in 'The Last of the Epics: The Rejection of the Heroic in *Paradise Lost* and *Hudibras*', in *Restoration Literature: Critical Approaches,* ed. Harold Love (London, 1972), reprinted in Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1987).

The Date of Samuel Butler's Baptism

The first date recorded for the baptism of Samuel Butler was given by Anthony à Wood, who recorded that the author of *Hudibras* was baptized at Strensham in Worcestershire on 13 February 1612.[295] This place and date were repeated in the anonymous biography prefacing *Hudibras* 'printed by E.P. for Geo. Sawbridge in Little Britain 1704' and in reprintings of this in 1709, 1710 *et seq*. The same information is given by John Lockman in his article 'Hudibras' in the *General Dictionary, translating Bayle*, 1734–41.[296] However, there are marginal notes to Longman's article contributed by Charles Longueville. One note reads: 'I am assured by Charles Longueville Esq: that Butler was born about the year 1600.' And a second comments on the date (1680) and circumstances of Butler's death, which Lockman had derived from Aubrey: 'I am assured by Mr Longueville that there is a double error, Butler dying of old age, and not of consumption; and not at sixty eight years of age but at four score or thereabouts.' There is a further account in T. R. Nash's *Collections for a History of Worcestershire* (2 volumes, 1781–2) where Strensham is given as the poet's birthplace, and 14 February 1612 as the date of baptism.[297] However, when Nash published his edition of *Hudibras* in 1793 he gave the date of baptism as 8 February 1612. Finally, the Rev J. P. Shawcross in *The Daily Biographer consisting of short lives for every day in the year* (1915) gave 28 January 1612 as the date of Butler's birth. The Rev Shawcross does not say where he found this date of birth, and I have found no authentication for it anywhere.

The parish register of Strensham records under the year 1612: 'Item was christened Samuell Butler the son of Samuell Butler the xiiijth of February anno ut supra'; the transcript of the year's entries, sent to the bishop, gives the same date.[298] By modern reckoning this would be 14 February 1613.

The Strensham register should provide conclusive evidence, and the day given by Wood could be simply an error; alternatively it could be that the thirteenth was Samuel's birthday, not his baptism. Wood may have learned this from some acquaintance of the poet's. Longueville's notes, indeed, would easily have been discounted by the evidence of Wood and the Strensham register, had not a Samuel Butler been baptized at Defford, a parish in

295 Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. P. Bliss (London, 1813–20), vol. 3, 874–6.
296 Vol. 6. 289–99.
297 Vol. 2. 391.
298 Worcestershire Record Office, BA 2006/44, ii. 736.

Worcestershire that adjoins Strensham, on 11 January 1600/1. Professor R. Lamar has has established from family wills that the two Samuels were cousins.[299]

Longueville's notes, E. S. de Beer has remarked, 'so far as they can be tested are not trustworthy'.[300] Longueville's father William Longueville was a close friend of Butler, whose funeral he is said to have paid for and whose manuscripts he received after his death.[301] But against the authority of Longueville's son is to be set that of John Aubrey. Aubrey knew Butler well and was one of 'his old acquaintance' who attended the funeral and 'helped to carry the pall.'[302] He was aware of the course of Butler's illness, and recorded the poet's death from 'a consumption'. He does not mention Longueville in any connexion with Butler. And though Aubrey does not give the date of Butler's birth, he does record that he died 25 September 1680 'circiter 70'. This obviously supports Wood's date for Butler's birth, and as Aubrey knew Butler, he may have learnt his age directly from the poet, rather than from Wood.

Wood's reference to Strensham as the birthplace suggests that the younger Samuel was the poet. Also, we know that this younger Samuel inherited by his father's will 'two dictionaries, Cooper and Thomasius, and all my lawe and latine books of logicke, rhetorike, philosophy, poetry, phisike, my great Dodaneus Herball, and all my other Lattine and greeke bookes whatsoever.'[303] This at least is in keeping with what we know of the poet; whereas we know nothing of the Samuel Butler born 1600/1 that would suggest he was the poet. No account of the poet's life gives Defford as his birthplace – and it is significant that Longueville made no correction to the mention of Strensham in Lockman's article; and there is no Samuel Butler baptized at Strensham in 1600/1.

There is a further argument in support of the 1612/13 birth date. One of Aubrey's accounts of the birthplace of the poet reads: 'he was born in Worcestershire, hard by Barbon bridge, half a mile from Worcester, in the parish of St John, Mr Hill thinks who went to school with him.'[304] Certainly this is not Strensham, but the Strensham Butlers were living at Barbourne in the 1620s. Mr Hill may have known Samuel was living at Barbourne and have 'thought' that he was born there. Hill has been identified as having been admitted to the

[299] 'De Nouveau sur l'auteur d'Hudibras', *Revue Anglo-américaine*, 1, 1924, 213–27.
[300] 'The Later Life of Samuel Butler', *Review of English Studies*, 4, 1928, 159.
[301] Ibid., 166 and n. 4.
[302] *Brief Lives*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford, 1898), vol. 1, 136.
[303] Worcestershire Record Office, 008.7 1627/29.176.
[304] *Brief Lives*, vol. 1, 135.

King's School, Worcester, in 1626.[305] Admitted in 1626 he could have been a contemporary of the Samuel Butler born in 1612/13, but not a contemporary of the Samuel born in 1600/1. Although the Defford Butlers had an interest in the land at Barbourne, there is no evidence that they ever lived there.

Aubrey also has an entry that 'Mr Samuel Butler was borne at Pershore in Worcestershire, as we suppose: his brother lives there.' This can be explained, however, by supposing that Aubrey had been told Pershore was the birthplace since it was the nearest town of any size to Strensham, and one that he might know of. Aubrey had substituted the Pershore entry to replace one that he had cancelled; this claimed that Butler 'was born at Powyk neer Worcester (where he went to school)'. There is no evidence to suggest that the poet had any connexion with Powick, although the Powick parish register records that several Butlers were living there in the seventeenth century. There is no evidence, however, that the that the Strensham Butlers ever lived at Powick or were related to the Powick Butlers.

The evidence of Wood on the poet's baptismal date and birthplace, and of Aubrey on the poet's age at his death, and the testimony of Mr Hill would together suggest that Longueville's account is incorrect; and T. R. Nash, who was an eighteenth-century vicar of Strensham, was able to ascertain from an examination of the parish register the correct date of baptism. It was this date, given in Nash's *Worcestershire*, that Dr Johnson followed in his Life of Butler.

Nash mentioned, in this first account that the poet's father was a churchwarden. In his later edition of *Hudibras*, he improved on this simple fact as well as giving a new baptismal date. Samuel's 'father was a churchwarden of the parish the year before his son Samuel was born, and has entered his baptism, dated February 8, 1612, with his own hand in the parish register.'[306]

Perhaps as this seemed to be a revised account, it has been repeated by several editors and writers and so 8 February has been given as the date of birth in the biographical introduction to the Bohn edition of *Hudibras* (1859), by Saintsbury in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and by Gosse in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.[307] The idea of the father entering his son's baptism in the parish register has appealed to guidebook writers and has been repeated by Gosse in the *DNB* where he implies that Samuel Butler senior was

[305] C. V. Hancock, *The Vigornian*, November 1921.
[306] Introduction, II.
[307] Ninth edition (1876), vol. 4, 588–90.

churchwarden at the time of his son's baptism and recorded the entry himself. In fact Samuel Butler senior had been churchwarden the preceding year and his signature below that year's entries is in a distinctive hand; he did not enter his son's baptism, and the hand that did enter it, recorded it clearly as xiiijth February.

Samuel Butler at Barbourne

Samuel Butler (1613–1680) is a poet about whom we know very little. There are a number of early biographical accounts of him,[308] and in 1928 some facts of his later career were collected by E. S. de Beer.[309] In 1924 René Lamar discovered the wills of the poet's father and grandfather, and from these and parish registers established the existence of other members of the family in the villages of Strensham and Defford in Worcestershire.[310]

Samuel was born at Strensham, a village on the River Avon about ten miles southeast of Worcester. Lamar's discovery of the will of the poet's father, Samuel Butler senior,[311] showed that at the time of his death Samuel senior was living at Defford, a village two miles north of Strensham, and that he also held a house and land at Barbourne, a district about a mile north of the centre of Worcester.

Nash recorded that Samuel senior had four sons and three daughters; but in Samuel's will a fourth daughter, Margaret, is mentioned. Lamar found no record of her baptism in the Strensham parish register (which records the baptism of all the other children) and seems not to have followed up the Barbourne reference, for in the register of the church of St John the Baptist, Claines (in which parish Barbourne lay) is the entry 'Margaret the daughter of Samuel Butler gen was baptyzed the xivth day of July 1621.'

We know from his will that the father of the poet had a house at Barbourne in Claines, was styled a gentleman, and had a daughter called Margaret who was his youngest child; his second youngest child John was baptized in 1619 at Strensham. No other Samuel Butler is mentioned in the Claines register. We may safely identify this Samuel as the poet's father.

Samuel held a lease at Strensham,[312] from the Russells, to whom he acted as some sort of servant.[313] But it appears that the lease expired some time after May, 1619, and that the family then went to live at Barbourne where Samuel had acquired land from his father Richard. Samuel must have received the land before Richard's death in 1598/9, since

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308 Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. P. Bliss (1813–20), vol. 3. 874; Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford, 1898), vol., 135: anonymous biography prefacing the edition of *Hudibras* 'printed by E. for Geo. Sawbridge in Little Britain 1704'; T. R. Nash, introduction to *Hudibras* (London, 1793).

309 'The Later Life of Samuel Butler', *Review of English Studies*, 4, 1928, 159.

310 'Du Nouveau sur 1'auteur d'Hudibras,' *Revue Anglo-américaine*, 1, 213–27.

311 Worcestershire Record Office, 008.7 1627/29.

312 See will of Richard Butler, WRO 007.7 1598/175, and Wood, Nash, and the *Victoria County History of Worcestershire* (London, 1924), vol. 4, 205-6.

313 Leslie Hotson, *I, William Shakespeare …* (London, 1937), 34.

(contrary to Lamar's statement) there is no mention of it in Richard's will. Part of this land, Samuel writes in his will, 'came unto me by a deed of uses heretofore made by Richard Butler my father deceased and fell unto my lott and parte by a deed of division made in writinge betweene Frauncis Butler my brother deceased and my self as by the said writing of partition it doth more plainly appeare.' Samuel bequeathed this to his eldest son Thomas. The other part of the Barbourne land he bequeathed to his second son, Samuel the poet: 'all the lands meddowes lessowes pastures earable lands with all and singuler their appurtenance sett lyenge and beinge in Barbone or Claynes aforesaid which I lately bought and purchased of Richard Butler my brother Ffrauncis Butler's eldest sonne as by a deede of conveyance of the same lands it doth more playnely appeare.' None of these deeds is known to survive.

When Samuel senior died he had left Barbourne and was living at Defford where he had a holding 'granted for terme of my life by coppy of court Roll under the hand & seale of Sir Thomas Russell knight deceased.' Sir Thomas Russell who lived from 1577–1632 was named as overseer to Samuel's will. Since Samuel referred to Thomas deceased, he must have intended the grandfather of the one named as overseer, the Sir Thomas who died in 1574. This implies that Samuel had the Defford land before 1574 – though our first and only record of his living there is in his will. All other references are to his living at Strensham or Barbourne.

John Aubrey in his life of the poet wrote 'Mr Samuel Butler was born at Pershore in Worcestershire as we supposed; his brother lives there.' But there is a further note: 'He was born in Worcestershire, hard by Barbon-bridge, half a mile from Worcester in the parish of St. John, Mr Hill thinks, who went to school with him.'

Different transcriptions of Aubrey vary. Clark's edition omits 'in the parish of St. John'; others give Barton-bridge. Edmund Gosse in the *D.N.B.* confidently created a new village: 'According to Aubrey, however, the poet was born not in the Strensham house but at a hamlet called Bartonbridge, half a mile out of Worcester.'

We know from the Strensham parish register that Samuel Butler the son of Samuel Butler was baptized 14 February 1612/13. Pershore, about two and a half miles from Defford, four from Strensham, may have been given to Aubrey as the nearest town of reasonable size to Butler's birthplace. The Bartonbridge mistake has been repeated too often; clearly Barbourne bridge is intended, and a bridge today still carries traffic over Barbourne brook. The 'parish of St. John' is not the parish of St. John in Bedwardine at Worcester – which is some distance away on the other side of the River Severn from Barbourne – but that of St

John the Baptist, Claines, which included Barbourne until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Hill only *thinks* Butler was born at Barbourne. As he claims to have gone to school *with* Butler, he may well have known where Butler was living, and assumed he was born in the same house. It is now generally accepted that Samuel the poet was educated at the King's School, Worcester. Hill has been identified as the Rev. Richard Hill, vicar of Stretton in Herefordshire, who was admitted as a King's Scholar at the school on 26 November, 1626.[314] There is no record of Samuel's being at the school, only Hill's testimony; however, if he entered and left at the normal ages, he would have begun his schooling in 1622 and left in 1627. 1622 was the year following Margaret's christening at St John's, Claines, and we may assume the family were then, and for some time, living at Barbourne in the parish of Claines, a walk of about a mile and a half from the school. The inventory of Samuel senior's goods, made in 1627, shows that there were beds and furniture worth £5 left at his house in Barbourne, and this suggests the family had been living there not long before his death in 1626. Samuel must have been at school before 1626; Wood and the 1704 biographer name his headmaster as Henry Bright – and Bright died in 1626.

But Samuel must also have gone to school after 1626; Hill was admitted to the school on the day the poet's father was buried, and he claims to have been at school *with* Samuel. Unless he actually saw or spoke to Samuel (it was a small school) there is no reason why he should have remembered him; after all, Samuel did not achieve any fame at all until he was fifty, and then it was a fame away from home.

As the lease expired on the Defford holding at the death of Samuel senior, the family most probably returned to the Barbourne house. Where else could they all live, eight children and the mother? Samuel could then have gone to school in 1627 from Barbourne, when he would have been a contemporary, though four years the senior, of Mr Hill. He began and ended his schooling, it appears, when the family were living at Barbourne; though there was an intermediate period, when the family was living at Defford, during which he presumably had to ride in the eight miles to Worcester each day.

Barbourne was in the manor of Whistons and Claines, which belonged to the Bishop of Worcester. There is in existence an account book of the bishop's lands giving details of his

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314 See C. V. Hancock, *The Vigornian*, November 1921. Argument summarized in Alec Macdonald, *A History of the King's School Worcester* (London, 1936), 108. The record of Hill's scholarship is transcribed in Leach, *Early Education in Worcestershire* (Worcester, 1913), 278–9. René Lamar's 'Samuel Butler et l'école du roi', *Etudes anglaises*, 5, 1952, 17, gives no new material.

tenants in different manors.[315] In the main the accounts are confined to the middle and late seventeenth century. Under the section on Whistons and Claines there is (fol. 54) a list of free tenants ('tenentes liberi') which had been transcribed from two previous lists made in 1615 and 1637. The holdings of free tenants are listed, with the names of the tenant of 1615 and 1637, and of any intermediate tenant. The list is subdivided into areas of the Manor of Whistons and Claines, and under Barbourne is the entry:

1615
Sam: &
Ric: Butler
Gen

To its right is bracketed the entry:

1637
Gilb. Norton Gen (nuper G. Bagnal, mô Nic: Baker) — 04.0
1637
Tho: Bray mô ejus Relça(olim g. Graanbank) — 02.0
1637
Joh: Giles mô Gul. Swift Arm(m. I. Smith. B. Jer. Smith) — 01.0

On a level with this entry on the opposite page (the right hand of fol 54), bracketed in such a way as to refer to this, and written in the same hand, is a cross reference to this entry:

v. Rot Cur 26 Sept 1628
presentant Sam: Butler Gen
qui de dño ten. lib. in socag.
1. Mes & 20 ac. sive pi. sive
minus jac. in Barbourne pro
an: r. 7s obij ser &c

315 WRO 009:1 BA 26J6/4 ii/23399.

In his will Samuel senior referred to his lands at Barbourne as 'my free lands and tenements, messuage, house with the appurtenances …' It seems that by 'free lands' he referred to lands which he held as a 'free tenant'; the land mentioned in his will, or at least some of it, is, it seems, the land mentioned in the account book. Part of his Barbourne land he acquired from his brother Francis, who died in December 1613. (Francis and Samuel had acquired this jointly before their father's death in 1598/9.) The other part he acquired from Francis's son Richard, and in his will of 1626 Samuel refers to having acquired this 'lately'. In 1615, the account book shows, Samuel and his nephew Richard were holding land at Barbourne. They may have been holding this jointly; alternatively, they may have had separate but adjoining holdings, and Samuel later acquired Richard's land. By 1637 the land that Samuel and Richard had held had been surrendered by them and was being farmed by three tenants.

These are the only two references to Samuel Butlers in the account book, or in any other papers of the Manor of Whistons and Claines that I have seen. We may safely assume the 1615 reference is to the poet's father, in the absence of any other Samuel Butler at Claines, and as we know he held land there. The reference to the Court Roll for September 1628, must refer to Samuel the poet, as his father was dead, and was presumably made to supplement the account of the history of the land between 1615 and 1637. Samuel the poet, then, after his father's death, was holding the family's farm at Barbourne, consisting of a house and 20 acres more or less. It is not clear whether he was holding all the family's land, or just the share bequeathed to him. By the father's will the profits of all the Barbourne lands were to go to the four girls for a period of ten years. Then Thomas and Samuel were to take their respective shares; they could take over their land earlier if they compensated the girls. Samuel may have done this. Or he may have helped to farm all the family's property at Barbourne – somebody had to and the girls could not. He was 15 in 1628, Thomas was 20 and soon to be married. The other brothers were younger than Samuel – William 13 and John 9. Two of the girls were older but they were not married at the time of their father's death in November 1626, and we do not know when they did marry, nor whether their husbands helped to run the family's property.

Samuel, we might deduce, continued to attend school for the short time before he reached the normal leaving age, and then in 1627 he left to take over the Barbourne farm. Indeed the problem of Samuel's university education can perhaps be explained. Wood sent him to Cambridge, but possibly Oxford. Aubrey said that Samuel did not go to the university

because ‘his father was a man but of slender fortune, and to breed him at school was as much education as he was able to reach to.’ But of course by the time Samuel was of age to go to the university, his father was dead; a widow with eight children could hardly afford to send a son to Oxford or Cambridge. Samuel had made provision in his will for binding his sons apprentice, but he did not envisage a university education for any of them. Simply, Samuel the poet had no money; he did not even have the twenty shillings a year left to his brother Thomas in the father’s will.

By 1637 the Butlers had surrendered their Barbourne lands. Exactly when is unknown, but after 1628 the next reference to the family is in 1631 when Thomas had his son Thomas baptized at Defford. Later William and then John, married and had children at Defford, and the poet’s mother Mary died there in 1648. It seems that the family returned to Defford, only two miles from Strensham where they had spent their early life.

The importance of this 1628 discovery is that it is the last documentary reference we have to Samuel in Worcestershire. Afterwards the accounts of his career lack verification. The 1704 biographer claims that Samuel was briefly at Cambridge where he did not matriculate, and then ‘returned soon into his native county, and became clerk to one Mr Jefferys of Earls-Croom, an eminent justice of the peace for that county, with whom he lived some years …’ Unfortunately Jefferys is given no Christian name. Nash repeats the story but says that Samuel went first as a servant to the Russells at Strensham.[316] His father we know was some sort of servant to the Russells, but Nash’s account is not corroborated. Lamar sends Samuel directly he leaves school to Leonard Jefferries of Earls Croome at the unauthenticated date of 1627. Earls Croome is two miles north-west of Defford, and about eight miles south-southeast of Barbourne.

Leonard Jefferries was certainly an eminent justice of the peace and a very active one, but he seems to have done little or no judicial work after 1627, and he died in September, 1629.[317] We might have expected to see Samuel mentioned in Leonard’s will if he had been a servant to him – but there is no mention.[318] Richard Butler, the poet’s cousin, who was living at Earls Croome, helped to compile the ten sheet inventory of Leonard’s property – and again we might have expected Samuel to have been present and helping if he was a clerk; but he is not. And as Samuel was at Barbourne in 1628 he could hardly have been clerk to Leonard Jefferries and lived in the household at the same time. This rules out Lamar’s date of his

316 *Collections for a History of Worcestershire* (London, 1782), vol. 2, 391.
317 *Quarter Session Rolls*, edited by J. W. Willis Bund (Worcester, 1899, 1900), introduction, xlix.
318 WRO 008.7 1629/104.

going there in 1627. It is possible that he went late in 1628, but this is unlikely as he seems to have renewed his lease in that year; moreover, in 1628 he would have little judicial work to do for Jefferries – if any – and he would also be employed with him less than a year before he died; and this accords ill with the 1704 biographer's saying 'he lived some years with him.'

Nash says that Samuel went as a clerk to Leonard's son Thomas, and repeats the 'eminent magistrate' phrase. But Willis Bund in his preface to the *Quarter Sessions Rolls* writes 'so far as the Sessions Records go there is no trace that Leonard's son Thomas was ever a magistrate for his county; there is not a signature of his to any document, or any allusion to him as such. It may be that all the documents he signed are amongst those that are lost. It would be very singular if such was the case; but so far as the Sessions Records go, Thomas Jeffreyes to whom Butler is said to have been Clerk does not seem to have been a county Magistrate.'

The Barbourne date makes Samuel's working for Leonard unlikely; but if he worked for Thomas, it was not for an 'eminent magistrate'. Leonard's fame must have been transferred to his son. The existence of paintings by Butler of the Jefferries, however, make it seem certain that Butler was employed by Thomas.[319] The 1704 biographer remarks on having seen these; Nash saw them in 1738 and again in 1774 when they had been used to stop up the windows to avoid tax.[320] And two portraits, crudely executed, and reputed to be of Leonard Jefferry and his wife are still preserved in the vestry of Earls Croome church.

319 A note by Longueville to the article on Butler in the *General Dictionary translating Bayle* (1734–41), vol. 4, 289–99, runs: 'Mr Longueville Esq: never heard of Butler's living with this Mr Jeffereys, but believes he might.'

320 *Collections for a History of Worcestershire* (London, 1782), vol. 2, 391. The *DNB* gives a distorted account of this.

Butler and Gray's Inn

Butler and Gray's Inn

Between September 1628 when he held land in Barbourne, Worcester, and January 1661 when he was steward to the Earl of Carberry at Ludlow Castle,[321] we have no clear information about the life of Samuel Butler. However certain deductions may be made from the Butler–Oxenden correspondence.[322] Enclosing a copy of *Hudibras, Part I*, Butler wrote to Sir George Oxenden, 19 March 1663:

> It was written not long before ye time, when I had first ye honr to be Acquainted wth. you, & Hudibras whose name it beares was a West Countrey Knt then a Coll: in the Parliament Army & a Comte man, with whome I became Acquainted lodging in ye same house wth him in Holbourne.

Richard Oxenden's covering letter to Sir George reminded him of 'our Old acquaintance Mr Butler whome we did use to meete in Grasenn Walkes hee did use to keepe Compa wth Ned Kelke & Collonel Malthuse & Dr Morgin & Mr Willm Morgin'.

Butler, then, was living in Holborn before writing his poem and in at least the preliminary stages of drafting it. Since his original was a committee man, the date of their shared lodging would be some time after late 1644 or early 1645 when the first army committees were formed.

If we accept Hardin Craig's arguments on '*Hudibras*, part I, and the politics of 1647'[323] we might advance this date to 1647; but the political events dealt with in *Hudibras* part I could have been observed or derived separately from the West Country Knight, who provided the character of Hudibras.

Oxenden visited England in 1639–41, 1642–6 and June 1659 – late March 1662. The first visit is impossible for Butler's meeting him since it is before the events of the poem; the second visit is not open to this objection, but references to books and events of the period 1658–60 in the poem would need to be explained as later additions to a previously completed manuscript.

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321 E. S. de Beer, 'The Later Life of Samuel Butler', *Review of English Studies*, 4, 1928, 159–66.

322 Ricardo Quintana, 'The Butler–Oxenden Correspondence', *Modern Language Notes*, 48, 1933, 1–11, 486.

323 Hardin Craig. '*Hudibras* and the Politics of 1647', in *Manly Anniversary Studies* (Chicago, 1923), 145–55.

John Wilders has concluded 'that Butler was engaged in the composition of the First Part between 1658 and 1660.'[324] The reference he cites to French fashions introduced by the Restoration (I. iii. 923–60) would require a conclusion date after May 1660. This would put the first Oxenden meeting as occurring after May 1660, and before January 1661 when Butler was in Ludlow.

Butler must also have been around Gray's Inn before 14 May 1660, in order to have kept company with Kelke, who was dead by that date. Quintana, indeed, interprets the mention of Kelke as meaning that Butler, Kelke, and Oxenden met in the same company and so concludes they must have met between June 1659 and 14 May 1660: 'this would place the writing of *H.*, I, not long before the latter half of 1659.' [325] The reference to French fashions would then have to be a later addition. It does not seem necessary, however, to assume Oxenden, Butler and Kelke all met simultaneously. Butler might also have met Oxenden first between leaving Ludlow in January 1662, and Oxenden's departure at the end of March 1662. This would imply a later completion date for *Hudibras* (though one in accord with publication in December 1662). But the letters of March 1663 imply a longer lapse of acquaintanceship between Butler and Oxenden than merely a year, and Butler's letter remarks that the poem was 'printed when I was Absent from this Towne', which would cover part – though not necessarily the early months – of 1662.

There is one piece of neglected evidence that provides a definite date for a period of Butler's association with or living in the neighbourhood of Gray's Inn. Aubrey in his life of Cleveland[326] records that 'after the king was beaten out of the field, he [Cleveland] came to London and retired in Grayes Inne. He, and Sam. Butler, &c. of Grayes Inne, had a clubb every night.' Morris and Withington remark of Cleveland's life at this time, 'Unfortunately, Cleveland's name is not entered on the Gray's Inn Register, but Berdan's statement 'I think we are safe in saying that he spent the fall of '57 in Gray's Inn, London' is probably as near the truth as one is likely to get'; and they quote Thomas Fuller's record that Cleveland 'dyed on Thursday morning the 29 of April 1658, at his Chamber in Greys Inne.'[327] Butler's association with Gray's Inn and with Cleveland must, then, be dated as having existed before 29 April 1658. How much before is unknown, though Aubrey speaks of the 'clubb' as if it were long continuing.

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[324] John Wilders, ed., *Hudibras* (Oxford, 1967), xlvi.
[325] Quintana, *op.cit.* in n. 3, 6 and n. 22.
[326] *Brief Lives*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford, 1898), vol. 1, 175.
[327] Brian Morris and Eleanor Withington, ed., *The Poems of John Cleveland* (Oxford, 1967), xviii.

We can conclude that Butler was living in the neighbourhood of Holborn and Gray's Inn in lodgings with the original of his poem some time during the years 1645–58 (the latest date suggested for beginning to write *Hudibras*); that he was there, and keeping company with Cleveland, some time between autumn 1657 and late April 1658; and that he was there after completing *Hudibras* part I in the course of at least one of the periods 1653–6, June 1659–May 1660, pre–May 1660–January 1661, January to late March 1662.

It seems likely that Butler not only lived in Holborn and frequented the fashionable Gray's Inn walks, but that he had some legal connections. Wilders cites Aubrey's comment that after working for the Countess of Kent, Butler 'then studyed the Common Lawes of England, but he did not practise' as perhaps indicating that he studied law at Gray's Inn, and he adduces also 'his frequent use of legal terms in *Hudibras*, and … a manuscript, formerly in the possession of Nash but now lost, in which he made an abridgement of Coke's *Commentary on Littleton*' in support for 'his connexion with Gray's Inn.'[328]

Mrs E. E. Duncan-Jones pointed out to me that there is further contemporary support for Butler's being a lawyer in the description of him by Andrew Marvell in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* part I. Having been attacking Parker, 'this spiritual Mr Bayes, who, having assumed to himself an incongruous plurality of ecclesiastical offices', Marvell then refers favourably to Butler: 'But lest I might be mistaken as to the persons I mention, I will assure the reader that I intend not Huddibras; for he is a man of the other robe.'[329]

328 Wilders, ed., *Hudibras*, xviii. Wilders, 453, also mentions 'the bencher of Gray's Inn' who claimed the original of Hudibras was Sir Henry Rosewell.

329 Alexander Grosart, ed. *The Complete Works of Andrew Marvell* (London, 1873), vol. 3, 35.

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